

Flamstead Village School

Trowley Hill Road, Flamstead, St Albans, AL3 8DL

Inspection dates 15–16 July 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has skilfully led the school through a period of rapid improvement since its previous inspection. She has been determined to improve teaching and its impact on pupils' progress.
- The governing body has become better at checking the school's performance and helping it plan to improve further.
- Teaching is now good and improving and as a result progress is good and more even across the school. Attainment is rising in all subjects.
- The skilled team of teaching assistants make a significant contribution to learning in general and to the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well at all times. They are very polite and well-mannered and show adults and each other great respect.
- Pupils are very keen to learn and to do well. Their great enjoyment of all that the school has to offer is shown in their well above average attendance.
- The safety and welfare of the pupils is of the highest priority for staff and governors. Pupils say they feel safe and their parents agree.
- The children's experiences in the Nursery and Reception have been transformed. They now learn and make good progress in a richly resourced and exciting environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Changes of teaching staff have limited the support subject leaders give the headteacher in driving improvement in their areas of responsibility.
- At times teachers do not check pupils' understanding so they can adapt their teaching and the work they set.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception are not given enough opportunities to develop their writing skills, including by having good writing demonstrated and talking through their ideas first.
- Although marking has improved in the guidance it provides for pupils on how to improve their work, not all staff use it consistently. Teachers do not always check that pupils have read and acted on their guidance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, all but two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, members of the governing body including the Chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 43 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. The inspector also took account of the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Year 2 read.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium is low. This is additional government funding which, in this school, supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well-below average and falling. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average and rising.
- The school operates four mixed-age classes.
- The school has experienced considerable changes of teaching staff since the previous inspection, although the team of teaching assistants has remained largely unchanged.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers carefully check the pupils' learning and understanding in lessons so that they can adapt their teaching appropriately to help all pupils make the best progress
 - marking enables pupils to be clear about how to improve their work and teachers check that pupils read and act on their guidance
 - the children in the Nursery and Reception have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills and that adults demonstrate what good writing looks like and give them time to talk through their ideas.
- Provide training for subject leaders so that are able to support the drive to improve teaching and the pupils' achievement. In particular ensure that they monitor teaching so they can give subject-specific guidance to their colleagues.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress has improved considerably since the previous inspection. It is now consistently good across all year groups. As a result, attainment is rising rapidly and is now above average. All but a very few pupils are working at the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in each year group. The most able are also making good progress as reflected in the large number now working securely at higher levels.
- Year 6 test results have fluctuated in recent years to no pattern. They were below average in 2013 having fallen from the year before. Current test results yet to be validated have risen considerably in all subjects and impressively so in reading. They represent good progress for pupils. This achievement has the potential to be sustained as attainment in all other year groups is above average and rising.
- Children make good and much improved progress in the Nursery and Reception class. A complete overhaul of the way they are taught has resulted in a highly stimulating environment both inside and outdoors. This enables the adults to promote well all areas of learning at every opportunity. The one exception to this is writing where progress is slower.
- Training has resulted in considerable improvement in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters in words represent). As a result, pupils' attainment has risen rapidly with all current Year 1 pupils passing the screening check. Pupils enjoy books and by Year 6, pupils are able to justify their thoughts about texts they read by selecting appropriate passages and quotations.
- The small number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are very carefully assessed and the guidance of outside agencies sought where needed so that programmes of support can be tailored to individual need.
- The school uses the pupil premium effectively to support the achievement of eligible pupils through thoughtfully planned programmes including individual tuition. This is leading to eligible pupils making good progress, although the number is too small to make valid comparisons between their attainment and others in each year group.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils learn well and make good progress as a result of improvements in teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers plan their lessons to make sure that all pupils are given work to get the best out of them. Lessons observed and work in the pupils' books shows that the understanding of the most able pupils is deepened through work that is more demanding than that set for others.
- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception class has improved considerably. The children's learning is now based on topic themes such as 'Farming', so areas of learning can be appropriately linked. Adults carefully assess each child's learning and use this information to plan activities to plug any gaps in their learning as well as to respond to their individual interests. For example, during the inspection resources were made available because one boy said he wanted, 'to build a caravanette'. Once he had started many others became interested by what he was doing and joined in.
- Teaching assistants are deployed and briefed well by teachers when supporting learning generally. Those working with individual disabled pupils and those who have special educational

needs have a very clear understanding of their learning difficulties and are skilled at interacting with them to move their learning forward without making them over-dependent.

- Teachers were observed during the inspection adapting their teaching based on the responses from pupils to their questions or in their work. However, at times teachers do not check or pick up quickly enough what pupils have learned and occasionally do not correct misunderstandings.
- Marking has improved considerably in the guidance it gives pupils on how to improve their work. The 'reflect and correct' process the headteacher is implementing is being seen more and more in books but not consistently. Teachers do not always provide time for pupils to respond to their comments and check this secures their learning.
- Children make slower progress in writing in the Nursery and Reception class for several reasons. They do not practise their skills enough when working on activities, adults do not regularly demonstrate what better writing looks like and adults do not give them enough time to talk through their ideas before committing them to paper.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are very keen to do well and take great pride in their work and their achievements. They are very considerate and like supporting each other such as by helping newcomers to settle in swiftly. They are very friendly and play happily together at break and lunchtime.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception quickly develop skills to make them successful learners. They sustain their concentration and persevere when working on activities, collaborate well and select resources they need to complete tasks. These skills are nurtured well across the rest of the school. Pupils are very proud of being given the responsibility of being a house captain.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Governors ensure that safeguarding processes are secure, regularly reviewed and rigorously implemented by staff. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and on and around roads. They are also taught to be aware of 'stranger danger'. Parents strongly agree that the school keeps their children safe and makes sure they are cared for well.
- Parents say bullying is very rare. Their children agree. Pupils follow the school aim that it is 'cool to be kind' As a result, school records show that incidents of bullying and inappropriate behaviour are very rare. Friends sometimes fall out but quickly make up. Pupils say there is always an adult to turn but that this is rarely needed.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has begun to assemble a strong team of staff, who share her ambitions for the school and the pupils. By setting high expectations and challenging targets she has managed to smooth out previous inconsistencies so that attainment is on the rise. The school has extended well its engagement with parents since the previous inspection, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Her commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils has resulted minimal gaps in how well different groups are doing.
- The headteacher rigorously checks each teacher's performance and provides suitable further training so they can meet their individual targets for improvement. She has made sure there is

now a very tight link between good classroom performance and salary increases.

- Subject leaders support their colleagues well in their lesson planning and check carefully the pupils' performance in order to identify where action is needed to improve achievement. However, they do not see enough teaching to be able to use their subject expertise to help others to refine their practice further.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well and plans are advanced to implement changes for September 2014. Subjects are linked where possible with, writing promoted effectively across all subjects except in the Nursery and Reception. Pupils have the opportunity to learn science by undertaking regular investigations and experiments and to deepen their number skills by their application to solving complex problems. The large number of off-site visits linked to topics being studied stimulates the pupils' imaginations. For example Year 1 and 2 pupils were observed preparing to write a recount following their trip to Southend as part of their topic on 'The Seaside'. The recent 'Culture week' did much to raise the pupils' awareness of others.
- The school has used new sports funding well to increase pupil participation in sporting activities and bring in expert teaching. The money funds transport so pupils can participate in local sports tournaments and competitions. A swimming teacher is paid for to give pupils throughout the school high quality swimming lessons in the school pool.
- Close and effective engagement with the local authority has enabled the school to tackle successfully the key areas identified by the last inspection. Consultant support has resulted in improvements in the Nursery and Reception and to phonics teaching. The school also works closely within the local cluster enabling teachers to observe and learn from expert teaching in other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - By reflecting thoughtfully after the previous inspection on the way it operated, the governing body has adapted and become much more effective. Governors have a clearer insight into the school's performance through more frequent focused visits to check the work of the school and the progress of improvement plans. This, along with their increased expertise in understanding assessment data, has enabled governors to become more searching in their questioning of the headteacher. They are quite aware that teaching needed to improve. They recognise how this has been achieved and the further steps needed. They understand how the headteacher links teacher performance to salary enhancement. The governing body makes sure that finance is available to meet school priorities and checks carefully the impact of additional funding such as the pupil premium and new sports funding.

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	117100
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	442096

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	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Jones
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2013
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