

Grendon Underwood Combined School

Main Street, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP18 0SP

Inspection dates 24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is not enough good or better teaching to ensure that all pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is not always as good as it could be.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is hampered because sometimes different teachers use different methods, particularly in problem-solving.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to apply their skills in mathematics in other subjects.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can do and lessons are sometimes slow and lack interest.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding during lessons; classroom display does not help pupils enough in their independent learning.
- Recent improvements introduced by the acting headteacher and her team have not had sufficient time to improve achievement across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed leadership team has evaluated the school's performance accurately and put successful plans in place which are beginning to show secure improvement.
- Pupils behave well at school. They are respectful and courteous to one another. They feel safe and secure.
- The governing body is now well informed about the school by senior leaders and shares a secure vision of how to improve the school. Recently, governors have begun to monitor the school well and ask challenging questions of school leaders about how well the school is doing.
- Attendance continues to be high and there have been no exclusions.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the acting headteacher, two curriculum managers and two recently qualified teachers.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 42 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) together with discussions with parents and carers in the playground.
- They took account of 22 questionnaires returned by staff.
- A number of the school's documents were examined. These included the school's most recent data about pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation, evidence about monitoring and evaluating teaching, and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.

Inspection team

Jim McVeigh, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Barbara Atcheson

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for extra funds (known as the pupil premium) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. Similarly, and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- Most pupils are from a White British background.
- The school is single form entry up to Year 4. From Year 5 there are two forms of entry with an intake of children from two first schools.
- The deputy headteacher took up the role of acting headteacher in May 2012.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - have high expectations of what their pupils can do
 - ensure that learning takes place at a good pace
 - ensure that they check on pupils' learning throughout the lesson
 - plan lessons that interest and challenge pupils.
- Ensure that pupils make better progress in mathematics by:
 - improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics
 - ensuring there is a consistent approach to teaching problem-solving
 - ensuring that classroom displays contain information that will help pupils' learning
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills in mathematics in other subject areas.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring the good practice in teaching is shared across the school
 - checking and evaluating the impact of new initiatives to move the school forward.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make rapid enough progress during their time at the school, given their starting points.
- By the end of Year 6 pupils reach standards which are significantly better than all pupils nationally in reading and writing, but standards in mathematics are not as high. This is partly because pupils are not always taught a consistent approach to solve problems and sometimes they do not have enough information on display to help them when they work independently. They also lack opportunities to apply their skills in other subject areas.
- The levels at which children enter the school vary from year to year. However, the current reception children started school with typical skills for their age. Key Stage 1 pupils over the last two years have made expected progress from their starting points to reach standards which are significantly better than the national average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is, therefore, typically better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils with special educational needs are identified accurately and, through an appropriate range of extra support, make a similar rate of progress to their peers. A similar level of support ensures that those pupils who join the school in Year 5 make the same progress as others.
- Pupils known to be eligible for extra funding make similar progress to their peers through a suitable range of extra support such as financial help for trips and one-to-one tuition in writing and reading.
- Although a few lower-attaining pupils in Year 2 struggle to blend the sounds of more difficult words, by Year 6 lower attaining pupils have developed suitable ways to help them to read new words accurately. Their regular reading habits help them to practise and strengthen this skill.
- Older pupils have good literacy skills. Their writing is well presented with good punctuation and they have a good range of vocabulary selection for their age.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching typically requires improvement because it does not promote good achievement.
- Where teachers fail to check pupils' understanding, errors go unnoticed. For example, in a session on letters and sounds in the Reception class, the way children made the sounds was not assessed carefully enough.
- Not all teachers take enough care in their planning to ensure pupils develop accuracy in mathematics. For example, Year 1 pupils used three-dimensional shapes to print two-dimensional shapes, which led to confusion. There are also times when pupils do not use a ruler to draw lines.
- In some lessons, the work is interesting and pupils learn quickly. Teachers set work at the right level and ensure that pupils get the right amount of help from other adults in the classroom. For example, Year 5 pupils made strides in learning about crime and punishment in Tudor times because the resources and activities used were engaging and pupils received appropriate and timely help.
- However this is not always the case and pupils' learning slows. For example, in a mathematics lesson, Year 2 pupils sorting information spent far too long listing the information and too little time on their task.
- Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to develop speaking, listening and social skills through the frequent use of 'talk partners' where pupils share their ideas with one another. In the better lessons teachers use searching questions to help pupils to extend their understanding further.
- Teachers are consistent in their approach to marking. They mark written exercises frequently and provide pupils with a clear evaluation of their work and further steps for improvement.

- Pupils enjoy the 'personalised learning' lessons where they can decide for themselves how to research and present their findings for a given topic. This approach helps them to develop independent learning skills well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They greet visitors politely and talk proudly about their school. During playtime, when moving between rooms and when working in groups, pupils are respectful of and courteous to one another. They are well aware of the school's golden rules about behaviour and are enthusiastic about the golden tree, which is part of the school's rewards system.
- Pupils feel safe and secure at school. The play areas are well supervised and have 'buddy' benches where pupils sit if they are alone. Pupils say they encourage anyone they see on those benches to join in with their games.
- Pupils learn about forms of bullying and 'stranger danger' and what to do to stay safe including how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils confirm that there is little bullying at the school and any incidents that do occur are dealt with quickly and effectively. The overwhelming majority of staff and parents and carers agree with this view and also say that behaviour is good and managed well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, but a few occasionally lose interest in lessons that are boring. They cooperate well and stay focused on the task when working in groups. They read regularly at home and in school, and maintain reading diaries properly.
- Attendance continues to be high and the pupils' good punctuality is further encouraged by the introduction of daily 'wake and shake' early morning physical exercises to music.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because neither teaching nor achievement is typically good.
- The acting headteacher and her new leadership team have begun to get to grips with what needs to be done and put effective actions into place which have ensured that the school has begun to make secure progress. However, there has not been enough time for the impact of their actions to take effect.
- Leaders have accurately evaluated the school's performance. Checks on teaching are now more tightly managed and more closely focused on pupils' progress and the government's teachers' standards. As a result, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are rising and teachers are taking responsibility for how well their pupils do. However, not enough has been done to share the good practice that already exists in school, particularly with staff who are new to the school. Moreover, how well pupils achieve and how well teachers are paid are not yet fully aligned, although this is changing as the quality of teaching improves.
- In the short time the senior leadership team has been in place, it has helped to inspire a better team spirit among the school staff, who share its passion for improvement. As a result, there has been greater urgency to improve teaching and increase rates of pupils' progress.
- Pupils now have a better understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve. The way that pupils are now organised in mathematics has ensured that there are less extreme ranges of age in each set. The high levels of attainment and attendance have been sustained and the introduction of a regular morning 'wake and shake' session has improved punctuality even further.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity. All teachers are now held to account and pupils' progress is checked at regular meetings. If any pupil is seen to underperform, extra help is arranged.

- The creative curriculum focuses on the key skills pupils need to study effectively. Pupils enjoy personalised learning sessions which improve their independent learning skills. They also enjoy a range of visits and visitors, which enhance their learning, and well-attended clubs.
 - The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development effectively. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their work and to understand the consequences of their actions. They enjoy watching chicks hatch and the opportunity to work together in groups. However, there are few opportunities for them to develop understanding of different cultures.
 - The senior leadership has reorganised the responsibilities for areas of the curriculum to ensure greater accountability and clarity of the manager's roles. However, not enough has yet been done to check the impact of new initiatives. Senior leaders have developed links with other schools to share resources, such as materials for special educational needs, and plan to share good practice more widely.
 - The local authority has provided good support to the new leadership team, in particular providing relevant and timely guidance to the acting headteacher.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is now a strength of the school. Its members have high expectations and share an ambitious but realistic vision with the senior leadership team for the school to become outstanding within a short period. Governors have been appropriately trained by the local authority to understand and interpret information, and the new leadership team tells them regularly about how well the school is doing. Consequently, they are now fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know about the quality of teaching and how performance management is being used to improve it. Governors are fully involved with setting targets for the school and hold it to account. They ensure that statutory duties are met and that financial resources, including the pupil premium, are managed well.
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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	110278
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	401112

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sangita Skilling
Headteacher	Kirsty Eales
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 June 2010
Telephone number	01296 770388
Fax number	01296 770388
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