

Maldon Primary School

Wantz Chase, Maldon, CM9 5DQ

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

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.

- Maldon is an improving school which has successfully resolved concerns raised at the previous inspection. Teaching is now consistently good and is leading to pupils' better achievement.
- Leaders, managers and governors have successfully recruited competent staff and made improvements in all key areas. The direction and pace of change are set by the headteacher, whose determination and ambition have rapidly taken the school forward.
- Teachers help pupils to learn with stimulating materials and methods that engage their interest. As a result, pupils' skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics continue to improve.
- Pupils make good progress, particularly children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. More-able pupils also make good progress.
- Pupils behave well at all times and their attendance has improved, so that most now attend regularly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of marking and feedback to pupils is not consistently good. Pupils are not always given enough guidance about how to improve their writing. The targets set to direct their learning are not always clear enough to guide them to make better progress.
- Best practice in teaching and learning is not shared enough across the school, especially in helping pupils to learn together and share ideas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 22 lessons or part-lessons taught by 13 teachers.
- Lesson observations were shared with senior leaders. Short lesson observations were made to observe the support given by teaching assistants, as well as the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Work in pupils' books was analysed with a senior leader.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, evaluations of the school's performance by outside consultants, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors met with different groups of pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were sought at the start and end of the school day, and through the school's surveys. Inspectors considered the 32 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered written comments from 33 staff.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Edwin Powell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is above average. Numbers have increased significantly in recent years.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Numbers have increased substantially in recent years.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The number of pupils who join and leave the school at other than the usual times is well-above average.
- The school does not use alternative provision off the school site.
- The school uses the kitchen facilities at the adjacent secondary school on a daily basis.
- The school runs a breakfast club. The after-school club is not run by the governing body.
- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the staff, including at leadership level.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, by making sure that:
 - best practice in teaching and learning is shared more widely, so that teachers make full use of opportunities to encourage pupils to work together and share their ideas.
- Accelerate rates of progress in writing across the school, so that pupils make better progress than they do at the moment, by:
 - improving the quality of marking and feedback so pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve
 - making sure that pupils have appropriate targets so they understand their next steps in learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children have skills lower than those typical for their age when they join the school. They make good progress and reach the levels expected nationally as they move into Year 1. They learn well in an environment of stimulating materials and teachers' well-chosen methods. The children make the most of the opportunities they get. They are also encouraged to investigate for themselves in practical activities, and well-targeted questions help them to persevere in their learning for long periods without interruption.
- Although by the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading is below the national average, across the school their attainment improves so that by the time they finish Year 6 they reach standards, overall, in line with most pupils nationally. Data showing how well pupils are progressing is used effectively by staff to support learning and accelerate progress.
- Progress in writing has improved across the school. However, by the time they leave the school pupils' writing skills remain weaker than their reading, speaking, listening and mathematical skills.
- Pupils have made rapid gains in their progress in mathematics. This has followed a close focus on the teaching of mathematics and the use of resources which better engage and interest the pupils. For example, careful and regular checking of learning helped Year 2 pupils make good progress in trying out different methods to add two-digit numbers. Good feedback by the teacher ensured that they kept to task, and helped them notice and correct their mistakes.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least the progress expected of them. Their progress is carefully checked and school data shows that the gap between their attainment and that of all pupils nationally, is rapidly closing.
- Those eligible for extra funding through the pupil premium make, at least, the progress expected nationally. Funds are used well to support their academic and social skills, helping them to develop greater confidence in their learning. The progress of those eligible for free school meals is carefully checked, and the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils, nationally, is closing.
- More-able pupils make good progress from well-focused activities which provide demanding work that engages their interest.
- Pupils who have been with the school since Reception also make good progress because staff are familiar with their needs, and plan relevant activities. The abilities of those who join the school late are carefully assessed on arrival and they are given additional support if needed. As a result, they make, at least, the progress expected of them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and much is outstanding.
- Teachers typically use varied, stimulating material resources that engage pupils and help them to learn independently. For example, pupils are able to use a wide range of practical materials in mathematics lessons to help them with their calculations. Skilful and well directed questioning by

teachers and other adults maintain the pupils' interests.

- Marking and feedback are helping pupils in Year 6 to meet their learning targets. They get clear guidance on their next steps in improving their work. However, marking and feedback are not consistently good across other years.
- Teachers provide pupils with targets to improve their learning in each subject. These are reviewed regularly. However, insufficient attention is given to guiding pupils through their learning, and providing opportunities for them to improve their work in order to meet these targets.
- Reading is taught well. Teachers' knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) helps them to say words correctly for pupils to use. Learning becomes fun in these situations and holds their attention. For example, children in Reception made rapid progress in learning a new sound because the teacher used a variety of effective activities, including games, and practical resources to keep their interest and attention.
- Older pupils are also encouraged to use their phonic skills. Year 6 pupils, for example, applied these skills successfully in helping them to improve their spelling of tricky words and understanding of technical language. Good progress was made because the teacher made sure the activities carefully matched the abilities of the pupils.
- Teaching of calculation skills is good. Pupils in Year 5, for example, developed a good understanding of word problems for dividing numbers using different methods. Learning was consolidated by the teacher bringing the pupils together at the end, and careful questioning enabled pupils to reflect on what they had learned.
- Teachers give pupils confidence in use of different types of equipment, including computers. For example, Year 4 pupils developed interesting ideas of how to produce databases which connected similar things within branching networks. They were helped by a clear explanation by the teacher, opportunities to discuss their ideas with partners and to practise their skills.
- Teachers group pupils within classes to support their learning. Smaller groups of similar abilities enable staff to identify quickly any pupil who experiences difficulties in learning. Extra help from other adults always enables pupils to make, at least, the progress expected of them.
- Although teaching is good, pupils are not always given enough opportunity to work independently and to make better than good progress. On occasion, they lack enough opportunity to work with others and share ideas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is typically good. Pupils respond well to adult supervision. They are polite and are welcoming to visitors. As one said, 'I like Maldon Primary because it is a good place to meet people who speak different languages.'
- Pupils are taught to show respect and consideration for others. For example, one said that Martin Luther King has taught us, 'Not to judge people by the colour of their skin but by their characters.' Their typical behaviour reflects these thoughts.
- Pupils are sensitive about their own safety, and talk thoughtfully about the visit from the local police constable who has helped them with this. They also understand how to avoid cyber

bullying, and are confident users of computers and other electronic equipment. They say that the school deals quickly and fairly with the rare incidences of bullying.

- Pupils take on a variety of responsibilities, which make them keen to learn and to like coming to school. For example, the school council help to raise funds so that they can decide on ways to spend this money to improve the school.
- A concerted focus by the school, especially through a worker appointed to improve links with parents, has resulted in a rapid reduction in the numbers of pupils who are regularly absent. As a result attendance is improving further.

The leadership and management are good

- Since joining the school after its previous inspection, the headteacher has eliminated past underachievement. This has resulted from her uncompromising commitment to ensure that teaching better meets the needs of the pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has faced the challenge of more pupils needing extra help and care. Changes in staff, including at leadership level, have enabled the school to meet these challenges and maintain the momentum of improvement. As a result, staff morale is high – as one member of staff said, 'Everyone at the school is allowed to grow and succeed.'
- The school has effective procedures to manage the performance of staff. These ensure that the school's priorities are met, and that staff are rewarded appropriately for achieving their targets. Ongoing training has improved teaching significantly. However, opportunities for teachers to share best practice have been more limited.
- Leaders make effective use of information about how well pupils are doing. The improving progress made by all groups of pupils and the closing of gaps in attainment with national rates shows the school's firm commitment to equality of opportunity and to removing barriers to learning.
- The subjects and topics taught are enriched by a strong focus on using the arts, reflected in the many three-dimensional displays around the school. Opportunities to take part in visits to museums and places of worship also help to widen the pupils' cultural experience and make a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral and social development. An example was the recent performance of the school choir at the '02 Centre' in London.
- Parents are positive about how the school has changed for the better. A small minority voiced some concerns, but inspection evidence confirmed that the changes introduced by the headteacher have benefited the school, and that relationships with parents have improved.
- The local authority works closely in partnership with the school. This support was intensive during times of changes in leadership. It provides bespoke training where required. As the leadership of the school has led to improvements, this support has been reduced.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are kept well informed by the headteacher and the local authority. Opportunities to develop their knowledge further are taken up, for example in managing finances and the implications of changing the status of the school. They use this knowledge wisely to support and challenge the school in equal measure. They are careful in their use of funds to buy in external consultancy to help the school improve. This is having positive effects on pupils'

progress rates. They have supported the school through some significant staff appointments, which have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching. They oversee the management of teachers' performance to ensure that this is carried out fairly, so that teachers are rewarded for high performance, especially where pupils' progress is more rapid. Governor responsibilities include the monitoring of how additional funds, such as the pupil premium, are spent to support the progress of these pupils. For example, priority is given to small-group work and support for families, as well as ensuring that eligible pupils can take part in visits and clubs. They ensure that the school meets all statutory obligations, particularly those related to safeguarding and the safe recruitment of staff.

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	114806
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	401467

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	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Binder
Headteacher	Tracey Thornton
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2010
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