

# Wheatcroft Primary School

Stanstead Road, Hertford, SG13 7HQ

## Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- While attainment by the end of Year 6 remains above average, pupils' progress is not as rapid as it was, particularly in mathematics.
- The proportion of good or better teaching in Years 3 to 6 is lower than in the rest of the school. This leads to inconsistencies in pupils' progress and in their overall achievement, despite their good start in the lower school.
- In 2012, the progress of the oldest pupils who were in receipt of free school meals and who were supported by extra government funding was relatively weak.
- School leaders do not give enough priority to evaluating the impact of actions they have taken. There is more work to do on checking and improving the quality of teaching so that learning is more consistent.
- Governors do not provide sufficient challenge in relation to the progress pupils make and are not rigorous enough in evaluating the impact of additional government funding.

### The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because the teaching and the range of activities are good. Outcomes have improved and are now above average.
- Younger pupils make good progress. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils make good progress across the school and build confidence in tackling unfamiliar texts.
- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and behave well.
- Attendance is above average.
- Leaders with specific responsibilities, for example, for subjects, or particular year groups, are generally effective.
- Pupils are offered a broad and rich range of experiences, including Forest School. These are much enjoyed by pupils. Links with other schools are well-developed.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, of which two were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the school's middle and senior leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including records of checks on the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and the tracking of pupils' progress. They also looked closely at pupils' written work and listened to pupils reading.

## Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Blanchard	Additional Inspector
Paul Burton	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Wheatcroft is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds
- The school admits 45 pupils annually, which means that some pupils are taught in mixed-year classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- No pupils are currently educated through alternative provision away from the school site.
- The school offers breakfast and after-school clubs, both of which are managed and inspected separately.
- The school hosts an independent pre-school. This is registered, managed and inspected separately.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy School status, the Eco School Award, the International School Award and Green Tree School Award.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6, to ensure that all pupils make consistently rapid progress, by:
  - developing further opportunities to share existing good practice across the staff team
  - ensuring that work is closely matched to pupils' needs and that lessons have a brisk pace
  - making sure that staff demand consistently high-quality written work from pupils
  - establishing and sustaining consistent practice in the setting of individual pupil targets and in the marking of pupils' work, together with opportunities for pupils to respond to advice given.
- Strengthen the profile of achievement across the school, particularly in mathematics, to ensure that:
  - pupils in Years 3 to 6 build more effectively on the good start they receive in Years 1 and 2, so that standards rise further by the end of Year 6
  - the additional funding to support the learning of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is effectively targeted and closely monitored to ensure that they learn more rapidly.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
  - rigorously monitoring and evaluating the impact of all initiatives and interventions
  - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching is more incisive and developmental, so that the impact on learning is greater.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average, although standards dipped in 2012. School data indicates better progress through the school in the current year. However, there has been a downward trend in overall attainment by the end of Year 6 over recent years. Although progress is never less than ordinarily expected, it is not as rapid as it has been in the past, especially in mathematics.
- Last year, the progress and attainment of Year 2 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were slightly above those of similar pupils nationally. In Year 6, while their attainment was above that of similar pupils nationally, progress was relatively weak, particularly in mathematics. Overall entry points for that year group were above average. As a result, the school is not yet successfully 'closing the gap' for these pupils. School leaders have now reviewed the deployment of pupil premium funding. This funding also subsidised school visits and workshops, contributing to improvements in pupils' attitudes to school and their basic skills. However, the analysis of impact has not been rigorous enough in its focus on accelerating these pupils' progress.
- Outcomes for Early Years Foundation Stage children have improved. Children start in the Nursery with skills close to those expected nationally for their age. They make good progress, as a result of good teaching and challenging activities, and now leave Reception at levels above those expected.
- Attainment by the end of Year 2 is above average, although attainment in mathematics in 2012 was slightly lower than in other subjects. Consistently good teaching and current tracking data confirm that progress in Years 1 and 2 is good.
- Nursery and Reception children benefit from a good grounding in the linking of sounds and letters (phonics). Older pupils also make generally good progress in reading, with gaps in their phonic knowledge identified and addressed through additional teaching. As a result, attainment in reading has risen.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is variable. Provision for these pupils has improved, with more rigorous identification of their needs and better training for teaching assistants. Overall, these pupils make progress similar to the others, or better, although that was not the case for the few Year 6 pupils supported through school action in 2012.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Although teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 is good, teaching is much less consistent in Years 3 to 6. The weaker aspects relate to: pace; the use of assessment information to plan work which matched the precise needs of individual pupils; and to teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' written work.
- Sharing of best practice has contributed to the cohesive approach mainly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. However, this remains inconsistent. Shared expectations as to the presentation of pupils' work, for example, are more evident in some year groups than in others, leading to inconsistent outcomes.
- Improved training for additional adults in the classroom ensures that disabled pupils and those

who have special educational needs are mostly learning at the pace they should. The school recognises the need to evaluate the impact of all support programmes.

- The checking and supporting of pupils' progress are effective in Key Stage 1. Not all pupils in Years 3 to 6 are aware of the level at which they are working. Individual targets are seldom annotated or updated. As a result, they do not contribute greatly to pupils' progress. The marking of pupils' work is generally conscientious but does not always identify what pupils need to do next. Time is not consistently set aside for pupils to check through and respond to teachers' marking.
- In the best lessons, the pace is brisk and pupils are fully engaged in learning. This was seen, for example, in a Year 2 science lesson, where the teacher challenged pupils to generate a hypothesis and to structure an experiment relating to physical size and stamina. In an outstanding music lesson with Year 6 pupils, excellent subject knowledge, high expectations and effective use of technical language ensured that pupils achieved exceptionally well.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Staff have a consistent approach to behaviour management and this ensures a positive climate for learning. Effective procedures ensure that any incidents are managed well. There have been no exclusions in the current school year. Pupils are polite and keen to learn. Most parents and carers who gave their views believe that behaviour is good.
- Pupils feel that the adults in school respond promptly to any issues. Racist incidents, inappropriate behaviour and disruption of lessons are all rare.
- Pupils recognise that bullying may take different forms, such as internet bullying or name-calling relating to physical differences. The school encourages pupils to be responsible. Recorded instances of bullying are rare and pupils feel that incidents have declined further this year.
- Pupils have a good understanding of risk, supported by the school's work on personal safety, including 'crucial crew', a presentation by police, fire officers and others to ensure that pupils are alert to a wide range of risks, as well as road and internet safety. They know how to keep themselves safe in different circumstances. Pupils have various roles which enable them to look out for and support each other, as counsellors, 'buddies' and play-leaders.
- Attendance is above average. Almost all pupils arrive punctually.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Leaders' evaluation of the impact of initiatives, such as the use of pupil premium funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or of interventions to raise achievement in mathematics, is insufficiently rigorous.
- Although procedures for checking and improving the performance of teachers are in place and decisions about pay rises are linked to pupils' progress, leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching are sometimes overly positive. Not enough attention is given to the extent of the progress pupils are making when leaders observe lessons. Links with other schools are well established, providing good opportunities for staff to refresh their skills and knowledge.

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- There have been some improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the lower school. These show the school's capacity for further improvement.
  - External support arranged by the local authority has not provided sufficient challenge to sustain all aspects of the school's work at a consistently high level.
  - Leadership has some strengths. Senior leaders have brought about significant improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision, with sustained good progress in Years 1 and 2. Staff have been redeployed to the upper school to boost the teaching. Actions have already been taken to improve achievement in mathematics. Phase leaders have a mostly positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
  - The school provides a rich, relevant range of subjects and activities. Appropriate time is given to developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. A wide range of themes and topics engages pupils' interest well. However, while there are some missed opportunities to develop pupils' writing and numeracy skills across different subjects, the teaching of science has been sustained well, with information and communication technology used effectively to enrich learning. 'Forest School' is a powerful vehicle for focusing pupils' interest in the environment and fostering the eco-agenda. A wide range of out-of-school activities, visits and residential opportunities add richness to pupils' experience.
  - Pupils' social and moral development is good. Spiritual development is supported well through collective worship and church visits. Pupils have good planned opportunities to engage with other cultures, including established international links. Links with parents and carers are good. They have good opportunities to learn more about what their children are doing.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governance requires improvement. Governors are very committed to the school. They take up opportunities for training and understand most aspects of their role. They have defended the school's position in relation to inappropriately structured aspects of local authority proposals to increase the school intake. However, while they provide valuable expertise and challenge in the financial management of the school, they are, otherwise, more alert to the school's strengths than its areas for development. Governors' analysis of data and their knowledge of pupils' performance is overly dependent on the headteacher. The level of challenge they provide appears limited, with too little evidence of direct evaluation of the effectiveness of past decisions. Governors are, however, aware of the need to ensure that pay and promotion are firmly linked to teachers' effectiveness and are actively involved in staffing issues. They recognise the school's responsibility to ensure equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination. However, they have not had sufficient involvement in decisions about the use of pupil premium funding or the analysis of its impact. Although this represents modest additional funding in this school, governors are not sufficiently aware of the extent to which it is helping to close gaps in pupils' achievement. Governors ensure, along with senior leaders, that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.
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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117328
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	403316

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	340
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Robert Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alisdair Skinner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 December 2007
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 587899
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