

Flamstead Village School

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

Inspection dates 14–15 February 2013

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

- In recent years, pupils have not done well enough in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. Some older pupils need to be quicker in working out sums in their heads or solving mathematical problems.
- Although pupils produce a good amount of writing, it is sometimes let down by mistakes in grammar and punctuation.
- In some lessons, teachers do not match work closely enough to the needs of different groups of pupils.
- At times, more-able pupils are given work that is too easy and others are unclear about how to succeed with the task the teacher has given them.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the indoor and outdoor environments do not support children's learning as well as they should.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to find things out for themselves, solve mathematical problems, and express their creative ideas.
- The school does not involve parents as closely as it could as partners in their children's early learning.
- Until recently, leaders and governors did not take enough action to improve the quality of teaching. Some areas that needed attention at the time of the previous inspection have only just started to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards have been above average at the end of Year 2 for several years.
- The teaching of letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) is good throughout the school. This helps pupils to reach high standards in reading.
- There are signs that teaching is improving, and it is consistently good in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils behave well and say that they feel safe in school.
- The new headteacher has made a very good start in identifying what needs to be done to increase the amount of good teaching and to raise achievement.
- The headteacher, governing body and local authority are working together closely to improve the school as quickly as possible.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 12 lessons, seven jointly with the headteacher. She observed an assembly, looked at lunchtime arrangements, sampled pupils' work and listened to pupils in Year 1 read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the teacher responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the coordination of special educational needs, with two members of the governing body, and with a group of pupils. Two telephone discussions took place with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 41 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and analysed questionnaires completed by 11 members of staff.
- The inspector looked at the school's work and at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, its development plan, and information about pupils' attainment and progress. She also looked at records relating to aspects of behaviour and safeguarding, and at teachers' planning.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also well below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for certain groups of pupils, in this case those who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is low.
- The school does not make use of any alternative off-site provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A new headteacher took over the leadership of the school in September 2012 following the retirement of the previous headteacher. A new teacher in the Year 1 and 2 class joined the school in September 2012. At the time of the inspection, a temporary teacher was covering the Year 3 and 4 class while the senior teacher who normally teaches that class was on long-term absence.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and increase the amount that is at least good by:
 - ensuring teachers always match work to the learning needs of the different groups of pupils in their class
 - making sure that more-able pupils have work that is difficult enough to challenge them throughout the lesson
 - checking that all pupils understand what they are meant to do so that they can get on with their work and succeed with the tasks they have been given.
- Raise achievement, especially in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 and in writing, by:
 - sharpening pupils' skills in adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing numbers in their heads
 - developing pupils' skills in thinking independently and solving mathematical problems
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills across a range of subjects and topics
 - improving pupils' writing by increasing their grasp of grammar and punctuation.
- Raise children's achievement and improve their learning experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing a more stimulating environment for learning both indoors and outdoors
 - increasing opportunities for children to find things out for themselves, to solve mathematical problems that make them think deeply and to express their individual creative ideas
 - planning in greater depth so that children have the chance to take part in bigger and more exciting topics that span several areas of learning.

- Strengthen leadership and management in order to improve teaching and raise achievement by:
 - focusing checks by leaders and governors on ensuring teachers match work closely to the needs of different groups of pupils
 - increasing the involvement of parents as partners in their children’s early learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The previous inspection identified the need to raise standards in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 but achievement in mathematics still requires improvement. Whereas pupils' attainment in English has been mostly above average at the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics have been in line with the national average over the last two years. In their time in Years 3 to 6, pupils who left school in 2012 made the expected amount of progress in English, but some did not make enough progress in mathematics.
- Records of the attainment and progress of pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 show that some are still not making enough progress in mathematics. These pupils tend to find it difficult adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing numbers in their heads. They struggle when asked to think independently and work out mathematical problems for themselves.
- Children join the school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in learning about letters and the sounds that they make and in their early reading. Many children move up to Year 1 with skills in these areas that are better than expected but with gaps in some other areas of their learning. For example, their problem-solving skills are not as well developed as they could be and their artwork lacks individual expression.
- In the recent national screening test of pupils' reading skills in Year 1, the school's results were above average. Boys did particularly well, scoring well above boys nationally. At the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment over a number of years has been consistently high in reading and above average in mathematics. It has been more variable in writing, where pupils' attainment was in line with the national average in 2012.
- In lessons, pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and currently in Years 3 and 4. In these classes, work is matched well to the needs of different groups of pupils based on their age and the next steps in their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs did well at the end of Year 6 in 2012, all reaching the nationally expected level in both English and mathematics. In lessons, these pupils make good progress because skilled teaching assistants break learning down into small, achievable steps, and tasks for these pupils are often practical.
- No pupils in Year 6 were known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 and there were too few in Year 2 to compare their results with the attainment of other pupils. Pupils for whom the school currently receives pupil premium funding make similar progress to their classmates in lessons. Using additional funding to provide extra help for these pupils in English and mathematics has begun to have a good effect on their overall progress because the school is now exact in the way it identifies their needs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has not enabled pupils to make consistently good progress across the school. Although teaching is now good in some classes, there is still some that requires improvement.
- Where there are shortcomings in teaching, this is mainly because work is not matched well

enough to the needs of different groups of pupils. At times, teachers give pupils tasks that are either too easy or too difficult for them. In mathematics in Years 5 and 6, there are times when pupils are unclear about what they are meant to do or lack the necessary skills to succeed with the work the teacher has given them. More-able pupils finish work early on occasion and are left to wait for everyone else to catch up.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teaching of letters and the sounds that they make is good, and children get plenty of opportunity to develop their reading skills. However, they do not have enough opportunities to find things out for themselves and solve problems. This is partly because the environment indoors and outdoors is not as stimulating as it should be. It is also because there are not enough large-scale projects that span a number of different areas of learning. Mathematical activities are not always challenging enough, and time spent colouring in worksheets or producing pictures under close adult direction does not develop children's creativity.
- Teaching is consistently good in Years 1 and 2, and good teaching was also seen in Years 3 and 4 during the inspection. The teaching was good because the teachers planned work that was matched closely to the needs of different groups of pupils, sometimes with as many as four activities at a different level of difficulty going on at once.
- Throughout the school, there are some consistent strengths in teaching. Classroom routines are well established and teachers have good relationships with their pupils. Teachers often use interactive whiteboards well to make learning interesting, and they ask questions that encourage pupils to think carefully. They provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to talk to their partners, and usually give helpful guidance when marking pupils' work.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the learning of pupils they support. They are skilled, often leading the learning of groups of pupils in the classroom or in an adjoining space. They have suitably high expectations and are well informed about how best to move pupils' learning on.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour make a significant contribution to their learning. Even where teaching requires improvement, pupils are nearly always cooperative and attentive. They work together harmoniously and usually concentrate well on the work they are given to do. They are eager to contribute their ideas and it is usual for a 'sea of hands' to go up when teachers ask a question.
- The school has effective systems for rewarding good behaviour and keeps a close check on inappropriate behaviour. Pupils feel that behaviour in lessons and in the playground is usually good and parents agree. There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection.
- Pupils say that the school is a friendly place where they know that they are valued as individuals. They are aware of different types of bullying but as one pupil said, reflecting the views of others, 'Bullying does not really happen here'. Indeed, records suggest that bullying in school is rare. The school makes sure that there is no discrimination and pupils from different backgrounds get on well together.
- Pupils feel safe in school and all parents who expressed their opinion shared this view. Pupils are clear about how to stay safe, for example, so that they are not at risk from strangers or when crossing the road. They have a reasonably good understanding of the safety risks involved in using computers. The school has activities planned in the near future to increase their

knowledge in this area.

- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is consistently above the national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, until recently, not enough has been done to tackle some of the areas for development identified at the previous inspection, including improving the quality of teaching. Efforts to raise achievement in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 have met with limited success and checks on teachers' work have not been rigorous enough.
- The new headteacher has made a very good start in identifying what needs to be improved. She has quickly begun to tackle weaknesses and is closely supporting new and temporary teachers. The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is accurate and realistic, and the plan for development concentrates on the most important points for improvement.
- The headteacher has carried out many detailed checks on teachers' work through observing lessons, looking at planning and pupils' work. Detailed analysis of data and half-termly meetings with teachers are holding them more closely to account for their pupils' progress. This is helping to identify pupils who need extra help to ensure that they are given equal opportunities to achieve.
- The management of teachers' and teaching assistants' performance is closely linked to pupils' progress so that effective practice can be rewarded. Most importantly, the headteacher is vigorously tackling teaching that needs to be improved and is communicating suitably high expectations to all staff.
- Subjects and topics have been reorganised recently to meet pupils' needs more fully. Pupils have good opportunities to use their literacy skills in a range of subjects, but fewer chances to practise and develop their numeracy skills outside of mathematics lessons. A variety of special events, visitors and educational visits helps to bring learning to life and contribute to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents are strongly supportive of the school and generally kept well informed, although they are not involved as much as they should be as partners in their children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In particular, they are not informed regularly enough about what they could do at home to support their children's development.
- The local authority has provided very good support since September 2012 and has an accurate view of the school. The Hertfordshire improvement partner is working very closely with the headteacher, contributing to clear judgements about teaching and overall effectiveness. Local authority advisers are also supporting teachers well in order to raise pupils' achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring valuable expertise and are now making a greater contribution to school improvement. Although they have tended to support rather than challenge senior leaders in the past, they are working closely with the headteacher to improve the school as quickly as possible. They know that the school requires improvement and are able to draw on their understanding of data to compare its effectiveness with schools nationally. Through being linked to subjects, governors are working with subject leaders and they produce detailed notes of their findings when visiting the school. They are clear about the quality of teaching, including where teaching is good and where it needs to be improved. They have supported the

headteacher wholeheartedly in tackling weaknesses in teaching and are ambitious for the school. They keep tight control on the school's finances, including making sure that pupil premium funding is spent appropriately so that it contributes to the progress of those for whom it is intended. They make sure that statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding pupils.

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	401646

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	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Jones
Headteacher	Sarah Jones
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2009
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