

Round Diamond Primary School

Whitehorse Lane, Great Ashby, Stevenage, SG1 6NH

Inspection dates 6-7 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Children settle down quickly when they start school and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils generally make good progress across the school. Many pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to reach above average standards in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers make good use of well-chosen resources. They have good subject knowledge and high expectations for pupils' learning.
- Pupils are well-behaved in lessons and around the school. They stay safe and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The school is led and managed well. Governors provide good support for senior leaders and staff.
- Since the establishment of the new senior leadership team two years ago, leaders have successfully raised pupils' achievement by strengthening the quality of teaching. As a result the school is well placed to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always match activities to pupils' different learning needs so that, whilst more able pupils often make rapid progress, less able pupils are occasionally left behind.
- Occasionally, too much time is spent on whole class teaching. This limits opportunities for pupils to learn independently.
- Pupils are not always informed of the next steps for learning when their work is marked.
- Leaders are not always rigorous in judging the impact of teaching on pupils' learning when they look at pupils' books.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 28 lessons and saw nearly all teachers teach. Twelve observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils work jointly with subject leaders. Inspectors also heard pupils read and looked at their reading records.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, three governors and middle and senior leaders. Inspectors also held informal discussions with 17 parents when they brought their children to school, and with pupils at lunchtime and playtime.
- Inspectors took account of 49 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also looked at the questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including records of behaviour and attendance, safeguarding policies and procedures, the school improvement plan and information about pupils' progress since the appointment of the new headteacher.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stefan Roos

Additional Inspector

Victoria Turner

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are broadly average.
- The proportions of pupils with disabilities or who have special educational needs, who are supported at school action and school action plus, are both broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care) is below average.
- The school provides specially resourced provision in the form of a specialist base for 15 pupils in Key Stage 2 who have speech, language and communication needs, all of whom are in receipt of a statement of special educational needs. Consequently the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs throughout the school is above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery providing 60 part-time places for children in the mornings or afternoons and two Reception classes.
- There is a separate before-and-after school club managed independently of the school, which does not form part of this inspection.
- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2011. Since the last inspection there has been a considerable turnover of staff and significant changes to the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and eliminate the few remaining weaknesses so that achievement improves, by ensuring:
 - lesson activities are always matched to pupils' different learning needs
 - time is regularly set aside for pupils to work independently of their teachers in lessons
 - pupils are consistently informed of the next steps for learning when their work is marked
 - leaders rigorously measure the impact of teaching on pupils' learning when they check pupils' books.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Nursery with levels of knowledge and skills at the expected levels for their age, although they are slightly below in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. Children make good progress in all areas for learning, as they move through the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Results in the 2012 Year 1 national test of pupils' knowledge of letters and their sounds were below average because of weaknesses in phonics teaching. These weaknesses were quickly remedied under the new leadership of the school. Current Year 1 pupils are on course to exceed the national expectations in this test.
- By the end of Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been significantly above average in the last two years. Attainment in mathematics has been rising steadily since the last inspection because the new senior leadership team have rightly focussed on improving achievement in mathematics, an area for improvement identified at the last inspection.
- In 2012, Year 6 results were broadly in line with averages overall, although slightly fewer pupils than nationally attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress was a little uneven, with significant numbers of pupils making above expected progress in all three tested subjects, but with some lower attaining pupils failing to push on to expected levels.
- Pupils currently in the school are making much more even progress in English and in mathematics as a direct result of the improvements to teaching introduced by the new headteacher and deputy. Current Year 6 pupils are on course to reach above average attainment in English and mathematics, with a significant rise in the numbers of pupils expected to reach the higher levels.
- Some groups of pupils now make outstanding progress, such as those pupils who speak English as an additional language, more able pupils and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are now no significant differences in the progress of boys and girls.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium were approximately one year behind their classmates in English and mathematics last year. The school is using pupil premium funding well this year to provide additional teaching support for mathematics, reading and writing for those known to be eligible for free school meals. This has narrowed the gap in attainment in both subjects, and there is no difference between the standards and progress achieved by this group of pupils and their classmates.
- Pupils with speech, language and communication needs make good progress from their lower starting points. This occurs as a result of strong team work among staff and their skilful use of specialised approaches. They receive good support from a speech and language therapist who specialises in developing pupils' spoken language and non-verbal communication.
- Other pupils with disabilities and special educational needs in the main school are also making equally good progress as their classmates because teaching assistants break learning tasks down into smaller achievable steps. However, pupils who find learning difficult are sometimes left behind because activities and teaching are not always pitched at a level that is appropriate to their needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress over the past two years has led to a significant rise in the proportion of good and better teaching and the rapid reduction of weaknesses in teaching. Typically teaching is mostly good and sometimes it is outstanding.
 - Teacher's high expectations in learning were seen in their skilful use of questioning to extend pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Year 2 confidently rotated shapes in a clockwise direction as the teacher challenged them to distinguish between clockwise and anticlockwise rotations.
 - Teachers' good use of well-chosen resources was seen in many lessons throughout the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children made good use of the outdoor area when sharing large toys and equipment, and enjoyed all indoor activities in the well-resourced learning environment.
 - Further up the school, teachers ensure lessons are practically-based as much as possible. In one lesson, pupils were using protractors confidently to measure different types of angles. In a Year 6 lesson pupils were working at the highest levels in using formula to calculate the area and circumference of a circle, and were applying this to real life situations, such as measuring the area of a swimming pool.
 - Pupils acquire new skills quickly because teachers have good knowledge of their subjects, particularly in teaching of communication, literacy and mathematics skills. Pupils throughout Key Stage 1 make rapid progress in linking letters to sounds and applying these skills in reading and writing as a result of teachers' good knowledge of how to teach these skills.
 - Teachers in the Speech and Language Unit have a very good understanding of how to adopt approaches recommended by speech and language therapists to develop pupils learning in a wide range of subjects.
 - Teaching assistants provide good support for learning. In one Year 4 lesson, the teaching assistant constantly challenged pupils to use different connectives to improve their sentences when rewriting a story in their own words.
 - Lessons are carefully planned to ensure pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding builds on what they have learned previously. Occasionally learning tasks are not always matched to pupils' different needs, for example, when slower learners were set the same work as faster learners.
 - The quality of marking is usually good but sometimes teachers do not provide written comments to inform pupils of their next steps for learning.
 - Teachers generally make good use of lessons time to ensure pupils learn as a whole class, in pairs, in small groups and individually. Occasionally too much time is spent on whole class teaching, which limits the time for pupils to work and learn independently.
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The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school. They stay safe as they move around the school and use resources and equipment safely. Pupils are kind and helpful towards others and are polite and courteous to adults and visitors. Pupils act as mentors to support others who might feel lonely or sad. Two pupils took great pride in explaining their work as mentors to visitors. Other pupils also praised the work of pupil mentors in developing their confidence.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage stay safe because all staff work closely as a team to model good behaviour and ensure children stay safe through careful supervision.
- In lessons, pupils are well-behaved and have positive attitudes to learning, which are reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. Pupils respond well to the school's code of conduct in classrooms and to teachers' management of their behaviour.
- Most parents who expressed a view believe that behaviour and safety are good and the school deals with rare incidents of bullying effectively. Pupils agree and say they have a good understanding of different types of bullying and how to prevent it, and know who to turn to if they are in difficulty.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, with good support from the deputy head and leadership team, has rapidly improved the quality of teaching and achievement. Senior leaders generally monitor teaching rigorously, using the outcomes to identify strengths in teaching and set clear targets for improvement. However, leaders do not always take sufficient account of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning when they look at pupils' books.
 - There are effective arrangements in place to manage teachers' performance. All teachers are given targets to improve their teaching based on the school's well-chosen priorities for development. These are based on the school's accurate view of its strengths and areas for development, which are used effectively to plan improvements in the school. The headteacher has used training, mentoring and capability procedures well to strengthen teaching and eliminate weaknesses.
 - Provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs in the special resources unit is managed well by the teacher in charge, who ensures that all staff work closely with speech and language therapists to enable these pupils to make good progress.
 - There are good opportunities to promote pupils' literacy, numeracy and communication skills across a range of subjects. Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to enrich learning through visits to places of interests, such as the residential outdoor and adventurous activities trip and the wide range of after school clubs. Good links with local schools and within the community through, for example sports coaching, enriches learning.
 - The school promotes pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development well. Pupils build confidence in learning together and as part of a team and learn about diversity through their study of world religions, the celebration of festivals and through subjects such as geography, art and music. In an assembly, pupils were fascinated by the sounds made by various wind instruments, such as the clarinet, recorder, flute and saxophone.
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- The school is developing good links with parents. Parents commented on how much the school has improved since the arrival of the new headteacher. They are pleased with the progress their children are now making and feel better informed. Most parents who expressed a view would recommend the school to others.

 - The local authority is providing good support for the school and has helped it evaluate its effectiveness and bring about improvements in key areas such as teaching.

 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors ensure all legal requirements, particularly for safeguarding, are met. They ensure that all staff and visitors are suitably checked and that appropriate training in safeguarding takes place and procedures followed. A significant number of governors have been trained in safe recruitment. Governors visit the school regularly and take part in walking around classrooms to look at pupils' attitudes, learning and behaviour. They also receive regular reports on the quality of teaching, and as a result they have a realistic view of its quality and know what needs to improve. They oversee good arrangement for managing the performance of the headteacher and ensuring this links into the management of teachers' performance. They are using the information about pupils' progress well to help the school set clear targets for improvement in the attainment of all groups of pupils. They are ensuring that finances are well managed, especially the additional funding for pupil premium.
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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	117299
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	412309

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	492
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathryn Henry
Headteacher	Zoe Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	May 2010
Telephone number	01438 219410
Fax number	01480 311891
Email address	head@rounddiamond.herts.sch.uk

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