

Belswains Primary School

Barnfield, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9QJ

Inspection dates 16–17 July 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.

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points in Nursery and Reception and, increasingly, are leaving Year 6 with rising attainment in English and mathematics.
- More able pupils, in particular, achieve well.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and ensure that pupils know what is expected of them.
- Pupils' behaviour and their ability to keep safe are good. They get on well with each other, enjoy coming to school and are keen to work hard.
- Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and the systematic tracking of individual pupil's progress are raising achievement across the school.
- High quality relationships between adults and pupils make a significant contribution to the positive atmosphere across the school.
- Pupils are given memorable experiences across a range of subjects. They work hard at topic work and develop a love of reading and books.
- The new senior leadership team is rapidly improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils, parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff are fully committed to moving the school forward.
- Parents are very supportive of the school; they have great confidence in the way the school manages pupils' behaviour and personal development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Information on pupils' progress is not used effectively enough by teachers to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of those who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- Teachers do not consistently use their marking and guidance to pupils to tell them precisely how to improve or give them time to act on this advice in lessons.
- The impact of additional provision for pupils who find learning difficult is not measured accurately enough to show whether these pupils' progress is accelerating.
- Those with responsibilities for subjects and for planning additional provision are not yet fully involved in leading improvements in teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher and others with the acting deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons, at play, at lunch and as they moved around school.
- Discussions were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, and other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils, listened to pupils read and checked reading progress records.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including records of the quality of teaching and of pupils' attainment and progress, the school's view of its performance and the school development plan. In addition, records of the governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and reports from the school improvement adviser were reviewed.
- The inspectors took account of the 50 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), correspondence from four parents and 28 responses to the staff questionnaire during the inspection.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. This is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Four new teachers, including two newly qualified teachers, were appointed in September 2012. The headteacher was appointed in April this year. The deputy headteacher is on maternity leave. Subject leader and other leadership responsibilities have been re-allocated this year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maximise the rates of progress for all pupils by ensuring teachers:
 - use information about the performance of individual pupils, particularly those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, to plan lessons more effectively so that they match the needs of all pupils
 - give feedback to pupils that tells them precisely how to improve and allow them time to respond to this feedback in lessons.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - measuring the impact of the additional support provided for those who find learning difficult more carefully and regularly
 - developing the skills of teachers with management responsibilities so they can drive forward improvements in teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's skills on entry are below those expected for their age. They subsequently make good progress in all areas of their development in the lively and stimulating Nursery and Reception classes. Teaching successfully promotes their curiosity and eagerness to learn. Children make especially good progress in developing self-confidence, independence and their speaking skills.
- Although attainment has remained broadly average at Key Stage 1, it dropped to below average in mathematics at Key Stage 2 in 2012. School leaders have taken effective action to improve the progress of pupils in this key stage. There is now a wide range of evidence and progress data to show that pupils currently in Year 6 have made good progress and are on track to achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading. As a result of good teaching, younger pupils have a secure understanding of phonics (letters and sounds they make). In 2012, Year 1 pupils performed well above the national average in the phonic screening check. Reading is a strength; pupils are enthusiastic readers and many reach above-average levels.
- More-able pupils benefit from plenty of challenge, which is another strength of the school, so that the proportion of pupils exceeding expected levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is growing. Leaders have identified several pupils who are capable of higher achievement, and they are now being given new and very challenging opportunities.
- In 2012, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding was broadly in line with the national averages in mathematics at the end of Year 6. However, these pupils were about a year behind other pupils in the school who did not receive the funding in English, with writing being the weaker element.
- The school has used the pupil premium in a very focused way to provide additional support for these pupils' academic and personal needs. They have benefited from a range of well-considered interventions, including extra adult help, small group support and special programmes of work to help them catch up. Analysis of 2013 data shows the gap is narrowing between this group and other pupils nationally and within the school in both subjects.
- Although leaders have introduced new strategies to raise standards, the achievement of pupils is not yet outstanding because there has been some inconsistency in the progress made by different groups of pupils, in particular lower attaining pupils. Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made the same good level of progress as other pupils, but a few have not. This is because the tasks they are given in lessons are not always a good match to their learning needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers plan a good range of activities both inside and outside the classroom and encourage children to behave well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of effective strategies to support the pupils with their learning. This includes effective questioning and the use of 'talk partners', for example in a Year 6 lesson where pupils enthusiastically discussed the features of a good story.

- Teachers always share with pupils what they will learn in lessons, how they will learn and how they know when and why they have been successful. Teachers use resources, including technology such as interactive whiteboards, visualisers and computers, creatively to make the learning stimulating. For example in a Year 4 lesson where pupils were discussing why the Hindu festival of light was celebrated, a video was used to retell the story of Diwali. Pupils produced some high quality written work, which demonstrated their good spiritual development.
- The analysis of pupils' progress is much improved, and detailed information is being produced more frequently. This, with consistent planning, excellent relationships, good questioning skills and the promotion of a good range of learning activities linked to the development of basic skills are successfully helping to raise standards in all years.
- However, teachers do not always adapt their planning sufficiently to take greater account of the needs of individual pupils, particularly for less-able pupils. The impact of additional provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is not measured accurately enough to show how much it is accelerating progress, and this reduces its effectiveness.
- Some marking of pupils' work is very effective, giving clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. However, other marking praises frequently, but gives pupils little indication of how they can improve. Additionally, across the school, teachers do not consistently provide time for pupils to respond to their comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well at all times and their very positive attitudes make a significant contribution to their good learning in lessons.
- Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. They told inspectors that if they have any concerns, teachers and other staff deal with them promptly.
- Children in Nursery and Reception settle quickly and confidently into school. They also are very aware of the need to stay safe in their classes and outside.
- At playtime, pupils of different age groups play together particularly well, enjoying the access they have to the very spacious well-kept grounds and the wide range of equipment at their disposal.
- Pupils' knowledge of internet safety is good and they also have a very good understanding of the different types of bullying. They say any bullying is unusual and that adults would sort it out quickly. School records show that bullying is rare and dealt with robustly and successfully.
- Pupils have a strong school community feeling and older pupils regularly help in looking after younger ones. They settle quickly to work, and listen attentively and respectfully when an adult or another pupil is talking.
- Effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education contributes to a very positive environment across the school where all pupils know they are valued. They know that the school does not tolerate any discrimination.
- Attendance is average, and exclusions from school are rare. The school makes sure that all pupils attend regularly and are punctual.

- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the behaviour and safety of pupils in the school. Responses on Parent View, and the staff questionnaire, indicate that the school manages behaviour very successfully.

The leadership and management are good

- The newly appointed headteacher, assisted by the acting deputy headteacher, has made a good start in continuing the improvement of pupils' performance. It is greatly to their credit that the recent changes have been managed so well and that the drive to improve provision and outcomes has not been interrupted.
- The governing body has worked very closely and effectively with the school to support the changes made. Parents and carers are in strong agreement that the school is well-led and managed.
- Inspection questionnaires returned by staff show that the leadership of the school has their full support. All who work in the school have a common goal in terms of improving the quality of teaching and all pupils' achievement. Staff morale is high.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and the new senior leadership team recognises that improved outcomes are not yet as high as they should be for all pupils, and that teachers with management responsibilities are not sufficiently involved in taking on initiatives or leading improvement in teaching and learning.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning continues to be developed rigorously, leading to good improvement to teaching. Pay is closely linked to appraisal and performance management. Teachers are very keen to move the teaching from good to outstanding and actively seek ideas to make improvements, accepting constructive criticism as a means of moving forwards. Governors are appropriately involved in, and kept informed about this process.
- Effective checks are kept on the progress of individual pupils. This has helped to ensure that pupils' achievement is increasingly good throughout the school. However, the impact of the additional provision for those who find learning difficult is not measured accurately enough to ensure it generates the best possible progress for the pupils concerned.
- The school plans learning experiences that give pupils a broad range of skills and that promote their understanding of world communities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- During the inspection, pupils were practising for their end-of-term concert for parents. They worked very well together with great enjoyment and gusto as they sang songs in different languages, some in two-parts, and all with actions. Learning in school is enriched through a varied range of clubs, visits, visitors and numerous trips.
- The governing body has worked well with the local authority in recruiting a new headteacher. The local authority continues to work with the school on a light-touch basis.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a clear knowledge of the school and provides effective challenge and support. Under the guidance of the experienced new headteacher, they are ambitious for the school and know its strengths well. They take part in regular training and they understand how its performance compares to that of similar schools and strive for increasingly high

outcomes for all pupils. The governing body is very clear on the targets for the school and how these can be met. Governors are fully aware of the school's performance management policy and about the performance of staff and how it is linked to salary. Governors monitor spending carefully and have set up a working party to monitor and evaluate how the school is using the pupil-premium funding to improve pupils' achievement. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met and ensure the efficient management of the school's financial resources.

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	117365
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	412015

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Cutler
Headteacher	Michael Fearnhead
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2009
Telephone number	01442 264324
Fax number	01442 260137
Email address	admin@belswains.herts.sch.uk

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