

Hempstead Junior School

Birch Grove, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3HJ

Inspection dates 10–11 October 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 achieve well. Increasing proportions of older pupils are making rapid progress and reaching higher standards in mathematics and English by the end of Year 6 than in the past.
- Teaching over time is good because most activities are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs. Their work is thoroughly marked and teachers give helpful suggestions for improvement.
- Where teaching is best, staff make rapid adjustments to tasks when pupil responses show that this is necessary.
- Governors are well informed and understand how well the school is doing. They are prepared to challenge as well as to support school leaders.
- The newly appointed headteacher understands what needs to be done to improve the school further. Staff and governors share her vision and ambition.
- Pupils speak very positively about their school, behave well and treat adults and each other with great courtesy.
- Provision in the school for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Leaders, including governors, have successfully maintained the good quality of teaching leading to achievement, since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Pupils are not always asked questions that make them think deeply about topics and, as a result, some do not make the progress that they are capable of.
- Teachers do not always use opportunities in different subjects, including science, for pupils to develop good writing skills.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to respond at length to teachers' marking or to assess their own work.
- Pupils are not fully involved in checking their own progress because the purpose of the tasks they are set is not clearly linked clearly to their target grades.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 21 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 12 teachers. Additional activities included short visits to classrooms to look at the level of challenge for able pupils and the quality of support for those with specific needs. In addition, there were observations during break times, at a school assembly, and at a special Roman Day role-play event, as well as after-school and lunchtime clubs.
- Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and the deputy head accompanied an inspector on a series of short visits to lessons around the school. Pupils' books were checked to see how well groups of pupils, particularly the most able, are now progressing in a range of subjects.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, subject and school leaders. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 57 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as informal discussions with parents and two letters received from parents during the inspection. The views of the staff were taken into account through meetings and 32 responses to staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and discussed their choice of reading books.
- The school's own information on achievement for the current year as well as previous academic years was scrutinised, in addition to published information on pupils' achievement. Planning and monitoring documents were examined, as well as records relating to pupils' safety and welfare, including the school's single central record of security checks on staff, the behaviour logs and attendance records.

Inspection team

Patricia MacLachlan, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Velia Hartland	Additional inspector
Jameel Hassan	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium (extra money provided by the government for pupils including those eligible for free school meals, children in public care and from service families) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with small groups having Other White or mixed heritages. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is slightly below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also slightly 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 is not currently in receipt of the additional government sports funding.
- The school has, since the previous inspection, experienced two periods of interim headship, with the new headteacher taking up her post at the beginning of this term. There has also been a new appointment to the literacy leadership role.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that pupils are very clear about the connection between the purpose of their tasks in class and their target grades so that they can become more involved in checking their own progress
 - allowing pupils time to respond to teachers' marking and to identify for themselves the next steps they need to take in their learning
 - making sure that all teachers make the most of opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subject lessons other than English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school with above-average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics have been above the national average for several years and last year there was an improvement in the proportions of pupils who made good progress in English and mathematics. The number of pupils achieving the highest level (Level 6) in mathematics also increased as a result of well-targeted 'master classes'.
- School records of current progress from Year 3 onwards, as well as scrutiny of pupils' English and mathematics books, show that the headteacher and school leaders are ensuring that targets are now more ambitious and that pupils are being made aware of this at an earlier stage than was the case in the past.
- There is little difference in the progress made by different groups, including those for whom English is an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The pupil premium grant is used effectively to pay for small-group activities in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, most of the small number of pupils in receipt of this funding, particularly in lower Key Stage 2, are now achieving at the same level in English as their classmates. The gap in mathematics is also closing. Older pupils last year were a term behind their peers, but those in lower Key Stage 2 in receipt of the pupil premium attained better mathematics scores than their classmates. In addition, last year, eligible Year 6 pupils exceeded their peers' performance in reading.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy reading and receive good guidance to help improve their skills. Pupils enjoy visiting their well-stocked and comfortable library, and use reference books confidently in class.
- The new primary sports funding has not yet been received but focused plans are in place to use them. Physical education classes are supplemented with a wide range of well-attended sports clubs and, along with the gardening club, this is helping all pupils to develop a healthy lifestyle.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because strong and supportive relationships are established between all adults and pupils in the classroom, and pupils are consequently keen to learn. Well-planned tasks support pupils' good progress.
- Where teaching is best, for example, in a Year 5 science lesson on the phases of the moon, pupils were guided to make progress in writing as well as the subject topic. Different groups of pupils were given different challenges to show their understanding of light and shadow, with a more challenging task for the more able pupils to use free prose to form a hypothesis. There was guidance for all pupils, reinforced by the teacher moving among groups with probing questions, so they were able to produce accurate writing with precise goals linked to the grammatical points covered in their English lessons. However, there are not yet enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the full range of subjects.
- Teachers, especially those in Years 5 and 6, use assessment information to plan tasks that interest the pupils and respond to pupils' different levels of understanding. Tasks are devised for pupils with different abilities, including extension activities for the more able.
- Pupils understand the accuracy of their work because teachers mark their work clearly and regularly. Nevertheless, they are not always given enough opportunities to respond at length to teachers' marking, nor is it always made clear to pupils how the purpose of tasks that are set are linked to their individual target grades.
- Not all teachers are currently adopting the practice of the strongest in including the pupils in checking their own progress towards their target levels. The teachers who have adopted this

practice are helping the pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, to understand the precise steps needed to get to a higher level.

- Where teaching is best, adults reshape tasks quickly if pupils are not succeeding in order to help them to learn at their own pace. Skilled teaching assistants give extended support to pupils who need additional help to understand tasks.
- Pupils, particularly the most able, are given extension tasks and, where teaching is strongest, these include open-ended challenges or targeted questions that support deep and extended thinking. However, this is not yet the case in all classes.
- The majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) believe that their children are well taught and receive appropriate homework.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. This is because pupils work very cooperatively with each other, sharing resources and concentrating to complete tasks. Behaviour is good rather than outstanding because pupils are not always able to demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning.
- Pupils believe that they are well looked after by the adults around them. The climate of friendship and positive support from adults lead to pupils acting considerately and respectfully towards each other and to adults.
- Pupils understand about different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. They assert that bullying is very rare and has been dealt with effectively. Parents and carers express satisfaction with the school's good management of behaviour. Pupils have many opportunities to serve as peer mediators, mentors to the younger pupils and leaders of ecological and other projects.
- Attendance is above the national average because the school uses effective strategies to encourage good attendance, including among the very small group of families who find it hard to reduce their children's absence rates. Parents and carers believe that the school provides a safe and caring environment, and inspectors agree. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, as one parent of a Year 3 pupil remarked, 'the buddy system really works [because] it gives them confidence from day one knowing that they have a friend that they can turn to if they need help or have any concerns'.
- Pupils know right from wrong and are keen participants in the 'chance card' schemes that reward good behaviour and contributions in class. These reinforce moral and social development well.

The leadership and management are good

- Good leadership and management have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. There is now a system of checking pupil progress more frequently. Links have been developed with the infant school for assessment to enhance the already strong social transition to the school.
- The new leadership team is establishing links with secondary schools in the Medway Teaching Schools Alliance to improve the range of Level 6 challenges for older pupils.
- The capable subject leaders currently use their time to check teachers' assessment of pupils' progress and have made well-focused plans to share assessments with infant and secondary school teachers this year to provide even better matches of work to ability for pupils entering and leaving the school.
- The new headteacher has already developed a robust system for monitoring teaching, with frequent lesson visits that are improving classroom practice. The performance management system ensures that only those teachers who meet required standards move up the salary scale.

This has not yet resulted, however, in outstanding teaching.

- Provision to encourage spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils reflect on school values such as friendship in assemblies and religious or social education lessons. Opportunities to experience sports like mixed hockey and football after school are well attended. Pupils' own sculpture displays arising from Greek and Roman studies and the 'wonder walls' where pupils' poems and stories are displayed promote cultural development, as do the school musical and theatrical productions. Visits to local venues like Leeds Castle also help to bring history to life.
- Effective safeguarding systems meet statutory requirements and policies are scrupulously applied, with governors taking an active role in training for safer recruitment. Leaders promote equal opportunities and are assiduous in tackling any discrimination that may arise.
- The local authority has provided support during the interim leadership periods by encouraging collaboration with leaders of other schools, for example for lesson observations.. It has also offered specially tailored professional development for governors.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– The governing body knows the standards of achievement and teaching in the school because information received in the headteacher's regular summary reports is subject to challenging questions in meetings. In addition, governors make focused observations of learning, check books and have discussions with pupils on 'Governors' Days'. Governors have an accurate understanding of how pupils are performing compared with national standards because they use the data dashboard reports and have received local authority training in tracking pupils' progress in the school compared with national figures. Governors understand the link between teachers' pay progression and pupils' progress because they have revised the pay policy and have an accurate overview of teachers' performance. Checks are made that the pupil premium funds are spent on the intended groups because the headteacher reports on the impact on attainment made by the funds. Oversight of safeguarding is systematic and the budget is carefully managed.

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	118423
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	426602

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Cave
Headteacher	Sharon Smith
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
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