

Wilbury Junior School

Bedford Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4DU

Inspection dates

14–15 November 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

- Pupils are not making consistently good enough progress during their time at the school, particularly in their writing. This is, in part, because of a legacy of inadequate teaching in the past, but also because pupils have few opportunities to develop their writing across subjects.
- Not enough teaching is of the quality needed to drive learning forward so the pupils make good progress and raise their attainment. Teaching does not always meet the next steps in learning of all pupils or retain their attention sufficiently.
- Pupils do not always respond to their teacher's marking and so improve the quality of their work.
- The pupils' spelling and grammar are not sufficiently accurate to support higher standards in writing.
- In spite of action taken by the school, boys are not reaching the same standards as girls in their writing. This is because the teaching of writing and the tasks they undertake do not engage or interest boys sufficiently.
- The school is not using additional pupil premium funding effectively enough to increase the progress of eligible pupils and so raise their attainment by the end of Year 6.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is building on the foundations laid since the last inspection by taking rigorous action to improve teaching and the pupils' achievement. Governors and other school leaders are providing valuable support in this endeavour.
- The pupils' good manners and politeness help to make the school an orderly and happy environment. Pupils usually work hard and try their best, particularly when teaching and the work they do are interesting and challenging.
- The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Staff and governors do their utmost to ensure pupils are cared for and kept secure. As a result, pupils feel safe and are safe in school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, four of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff and members of the governing body, including the Chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took into account the results of a survey undertaken by the school during the last academic year.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's own information on the pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also took account of the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

Nicholas Rudman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the majority of primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for an above-average proportion of the pupils. This is extra government funding given to schools to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is high and has risen considerably in the last three years. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average. Their needs are varied.
- The headteacher was appointed from the start of September 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that pupils make more rapid progress by ensuring that:
 - teaching and activities engage and retain the attention of pupils throughout a lesson
 - teaching is pitched closely at the next steps in learning for all pupils
 - pupils take responsibility for improving their work by responding to their teachers' comments.
- Raise achievement in writing, particularly for boys, by:
 - sharing good practice within the school and ensuring that it is consistently implemented across all classes
 - providing planned and systematic opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across different subjects
 - focusing action on improving the pupils' spelling and grammar.
- Undertake a review of the way pupil premium funding is used to ensure that:
 - it is allocated to provide activities to raise the achievement of all eligible pupils
 - rigorous systems are established by which the impact of spending is carefully evaluated in order to inform future planning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils, including the more able, do not make consistently good progress across the school from their starting points. Attainment is below average by the end of Year 6. Test results rose in 2012 but fell back to below average in 2013 and were lower in writing and the new grammar, punctuation and spelling test than in reading and mathematics. This was partly because of a legacy of inadequate teaching in the past that still affects some classes.
- The pupils' progress in writing requires improvement. Opportunities for developing writing across subjects are not consistently taken. The pupils' inaccurate spelling and grammar also hold back the quality of their writing. Action taken to close the gap between boys and girls in writing has generally not had enough impact. Effective strategies for engaging and interesting boys have been adopted in some classes but not all.
- Those eligible for support through the pupil premium make no better progress than others in the school. Eligible pupils were over two terms behind others in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2013. These pupils had made slower progress while at the school than other pupils.
- Progress is accelerating and attainment rising in mathematics across the school as teaching improves and more is of a good quality. Greater attention is now paid to the systematic development of number skills than at the last inspection. Pupils are more accurate and secure in their understanding because they are expected to explain their reasoning when answering.
- Reading skills are now developing well because of more effective teaching and the thought put into choosing accessible and interesting books to stock the library. Pupils read widely and increasingly choose more challenging texts. Skills such as comprehension, deduction and research are given good attention in daily reading sessions. Lessons in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) for pupils in Years 3 and 4 are helping pupils faced with unfamiliar words.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar and improving progress as other pupils. Their individual needs are quickly and thoroughly assessed and their progress is tracked carefully. This enables the impact of personalised programmes including additional literacy and numeracy to be evaluated and adjusted where necessary.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but not all is yet of the consistent quality needed to ensure that pupils make good progress across the school. When not of a good quality, teaching methods and activities provided are not always interesting enough to grab and hold the pupils' attention. There are times when teaching is not always closely matched to the needs of all pupils. This leads either to insufficient challenge for the more able or teaching being beyond the next steps in learning for the less able. At times the pace of learning slows when teaching to the whole class or activities undertaken by pupils last too long leading to them losing concentration.
- Key features of almost all classes are the constructive relationships and consistently used strategies for managing behaviour. This means teaching takes place in a calm and ordered atmosphere.
- When teaching is good or better, teachers use their questions well to assess progress and move

learning forward. They use imaginative methods such as role play to stimulate the pupils' imaginations. Pupils in these classes are continually encouraged to learn from each other through discussing their ideas or working together on tasks.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well in class or when in individual programmes by the carefully deployed team of support staff. They are skilled at adapting material and making sure pupils do not become overly dependent on them.
- Marking is detailed and highlights clearly what pupils have done successfully and where they could do better. Teachers provide suggestions about how work can be improved, but do not always ensure these are followed through by pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are keen to learn and for the most part their attitudes are positive. Pupils respond quickly to their teachers and are always willing to answer their questions, although some lose concentration when teaching is not stimulating. They work sensibly in small groups and collaborate well when undertaking activities together.
- Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They show respect for adults and care and consideration for others. They move around the school sensibly and play happily together on the playgrounds.
- Pupils take their responsibilities with pride. This includes as representatives on the school council, as 'Wilbury Waste Warriors' showing their interest in recycling, or supporting others as peer mediators at playtimes.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what makes for different types of bullying. Pupils and their parents say incidents are infrequent and they know they can talk to a member of staff if they are concerned about anything. School records confirm this. They are taught how to keep safe when using the internet and through road safety activities such as cycle training.
- Teachers and support staff are consistent in their management of behaviour. They successfully help pupils with behavioural difficulties to understand what is expected of them so that there is minimal disruption to lessons. The 'iPod' (the school's support base for pupils) is a valuable resource where pupils are helped to develop their social skills and learn how to manage their behaviour.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching is improving, school leaders have not managed to secure consistently good teaching. This has meant that the pupils' progress has varied and their attainment fluctuated. They have not been successful enough at improving writing in particular.
- The impact of pupil premium funding has not been evaluated carefully enough in order to improve how it is allocated. Leaders are also not able to identify clearly how funding is targeted to meet the specific needs of eligible pupils. This and the gender gap in writing mean that the school is not meeting its drive for equality of opportunity.
- Progress has been made since the last inspection in eradicating inadequate teaching and moving an increasing amount to a good quality. The new headteacher is building well on this platform. He has quickly identified where further action is needed with individual staff and is using formal

processes for managing performance to ensure that only good and better teaching is rewarded financially. He has clarified his ambitions for the school with staff and is being supported in meeting these by a team of well-trained and effective senior and subject leaders. This and sharply focused improvement plans give the school the capacity for further improvement.

- The school is striving to establish a strong parental partnership such as by providing workshops in aspects of mathematics so that parents can support their children at home. The school also supports pupils and their families through links with the local network of extended schools.
- The school's engagement with the local authority has been fruitful in improving teaching through the advice and support of various consultants who have worked alongside teachers. It has also supported the induction of the headteacher.
- The organisation and teaching of subjects takes account of the pressing need to raise standards, particularly in literacy. This includes a strong focus on basic skills such as by teaching phonics to pupils throughout Years 3 and 4. Topic themes broaden the pupils' experiences and their learning is made more concrete through educational trips and visitors to the school.
- The school pays careful attention to all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils appreciate the opportunities for music, art and drama including participating in the 'Shakespeare Schools' Festival'. They are helped to understand wider global issues and develop an awareness of diversity through a variety of activities such as Black History Month.
- The impact of the new funding for sport has been held back by the change of headteacher. Plans are in place to fund travel to sports events to increase participation in competitions and to appoint an apprentice to help extend the range of clubs available.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's qualities and where improvements are needed through frequent visits and regular training to keep their expertise updated. Their training in understanding assessment data has enabled them to identify writing as a major concern and to challenge the headteacher to improve attainment particularly for boys. They are quite aware how the previous headteacher started the drive to improve teaching and assessment, and of the action being taken by the new headteacher to build on improvements. The governing body has reviewed its operation so that it can become more involved in shaping the school's long-term direction. They keep a tight eye on finances generally, but are not clear precisely what impact the pupil premium is having. Rigorous attention is paid to implementing all safeguarding requirements.

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	117121
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425246

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	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Parkes
Headteacher	Mr Dominic English
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2011
Telephone number	01462 620410
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