

# Pixmore Junior School

Rushby Mead, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, SG6 1RS

<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 September 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher and new leadership team work together extremely well. They have ensured rapid improvement in all aspects of the school's work over the last year.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved over the last two years and is now good. Teachers plan interesting work for pupils.
- These improvements mean that all learners, including the most-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs now make good progress.
- Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of how well pupils are doing. They are using their skills and expertise to help the school improve even further.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They have effective systems for checking their learning. They use this information well to give pupils good guidance to help them improve their work.
- Pupils have very positive relationships with their teachers and behave well. They are polite, well-mannered and keen to learn. They readily take on additional responsibilities with maturity and confidence.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. They have positive attitudes to school and each other. Key values such as tolerance and respect are strongly promoted and are well understood.
- Pupils feel secure at school because the staff place their safety at the heart of all of the school's work.
- Parents and carers are very happy with the work of the school, especially the way that adults care for pupils and keep them safe.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always place enough emphasis on the importance of correct spelling in written work.
- Pupils do not take enough care when writing to make sure that they spell accurately.
- Teachers plan work that is sometimes too hard for less-able pupils who need to catch up and are in danger of falling behind.
- Leaders are too focused on gathering evidence on all aspects of the school's work rather than concentrating more on the most important priorities so that the pace of change can be even quicker.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers consistently provide work with the right level of challenge for less-able pupils who need to catch up with their learning.
- Improve pupils' spelling skills by:
  - making spelling a higher priority in all lessons throughout the day so that pupils get more practice in spelling in all subjects
  - ensuring that all pupils understand the value of accurate spelling when writing.
- Further increase the pace of change by ensuring that leaders focus on securing improvement in the most important priorities rather than trying to gather evidence on all aspects of the school's work.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders have secured good improvement in all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection. The new leadership team that joined the school in September 2014 very quickly established what was expected of staff, reflecting its high ambitions for the school. Leaders' determination to secure the necessary improvements has been crucial to the rapid pace of change over the last year.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a culture where second best is not accepted. This has very quickly raised the aspirations of staff and pupils so that they are all highly motivated to improve. Responsibility for ensuring development is shared widely amongst leaders, with teachers in charge of subjects playing an important part in checking the quality of teaching and securing improvement.
- Self-evaluation is very thorough but, since the previous inspection, leaders have spent too much time on gathering an enormous amount of evidence on every aspect of the school's work. Leaders know that they now need to focus on priority areas so that they can concentrate even more sharply on tackling the remaining improvements needed to make the school outstanding.
- Over the last year, leaders have greatly strengthened their use of information about pupils' progress to check that they are all doing well enough. They analyse this information in detail to identify any possible underachievement and to respond where needed. This has helped them to improve the use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, who are making much more rapid progress now than in the past.
- The school has a good recent record for improving the quality of teaching. Good quality support from the local authority has helped this process. Leaders give teachers challenging targets to help them improve and, where minor weaknesses remain, they are being tackled well. Good management of teachers' performance has helped to improve teaching. Leaders ensure that only good teaching is rewarded by pay increases. Training has been well matched to the needs of the school and the staff, and has helped to improve the skills of teachers and teaching assistants.
- Leaders ensure that additional primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is used highly effectively to develop pupils' abilities, increase their participation in PE and promote their well-being. A specialist sports coach provides very good support to teachers, increasing their skills and confidence in the teaching of sport. Pupils greatly enjoy a wide range of sports clubs, including football, cheerleading and athletics, and take part successfully in many competitions.
- The curriculum (the topics and subjects taught) is well-planned. It takes good account of the needs and interests of pupils so that work is purposeful and engaging, helping pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have good opportunities to learn through creative activities such as music and art. A good number of clubs and visits help to bring subjects alive. They contribute well to pupils' good personal development and their enjoyment of school.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body has been instrumental in securing rapid improvement over the last two years. They have a very clear picture of how well pupils are performing and know where improvement is still needed
  - Governors receive clear information from senior leaders but do not just take this at face value. They check things for themselves, making sure that they understand what life is like for pupils at the school by talking to them and observing them at work and play
  - The governing body has used training well to improve governors' skills since the previous inspection. It keeps a watchful eye on all aspects of the school's work, checking that additional funding is being used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils in their learning, for example.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong focus on keeping pupils safe. Parents are kept well informed about procedures and express confidence in them. Safeguarding arrangements are monitored closely by the headteacher and governors, ensuring the continued safety of pupils.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve in all subjects throughout the school. They make learning fun and engaging. Consequently, pupils are keen to do well.

- The school has a well-considered marking policy. It is followed conscientiously by all teachers. Teachers give good quality feedback to pupils that helps them understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils enjoy being 'learning detectives' as they work on these additional challenges.
- In subjects such as art, physical education and French, teachers have especially strong subject knowledge and introduce new skills very quickly. They talk knowledgeably about their subjects and give pupils good guidance to help them improve when, for example, they practise catching skills or experiment with different styles of drawing.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the quality of teaching. They are confident that it is helping their children to learn quickly. They support the school well by helping with homework, which is purposeful and well planned.
- Teachers know their pupils well and assess their learning frequently and accurately. They plan demanding work that challenges the most able and supports disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make good progress.
- Teachers make good use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning. These extra classroom staff help to ensure that the new spelling programme is taught well across the school and is helping to improve pupils' skills.
- Teaching is not outstanding because teachers sometimes set work that is too hard for lower-attaining pupils who need to catch up with their learning, and do not always spot quickly enough that they are falling behind. In addition, teachers do not give enough emphasis to teaching accurate spelling when pupils are writing so that spelling accuracy improves more quickly.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop good levels of confidence and self-esteem. They have good attitudes towards learning and are keen to do well. They know that perseverance and resilience will help them to learn well and they show these attributes most of the time, often choosing the most difficult task when they are given a choice.
- Pupils are very confident that they are kept safe and are well cared for. They say that worries are tackled quickly. Parents and carers almost unanimously agree.
- Pupils keenly adopt healthy lifestyles. The many sporting activities are very well attended. Pupils are very proud of their recent successes in competitions such as a recent indoor athletics championship.
- Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically and enjoy contributing to school life by, for example, being playground buddies. School councillors have played a good part in improvements over the last two years. Their school magazine is a good celebration of their successes.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the promotion of British values are threaded throughout all school activities and are supported well. Pupils show kind and caring responses to each other. They have a developing understanding of democracy through the process of voting members on to the school council. Pupils are tolerant of the views of others, listening carefully when others are talking and taking good account of their opinions or ideas.
- Pupils say, and school records show, there is occasional bullying but it is tackled well. Pupils know who to turn to if they have a concern. They are very clear about how to avoid danger when using the internet, recognising that bullying can take many forms.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is an orderly community because pupils understand the school rules and appreciate their value. They enjoy receiving 'golden tickets' for doing something well and this motivates them to try even harder.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. Discussions with pupils and school records show that disruption in lessons is extremely rare. Pupils who need extra support to help them behave well are very positive about the help they are given. They enjoy lunchtime activities that teach them to learn to play sensibly with others.

- Pupils get on well together and take good care of the school site by keeping it tidy and litter free. They say that 'work is fun' and 'we learn lots of new things every day'. Their love of learning means that they approach work with enthusiasm and confidence. Pupils try hard and are keen to succeed, but they do not always take enough care to spell accurately when they are writing.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- Improvements over the last two years have ensured that outcomes for pupils are now good. Pupils are now being well prepared for the next stage of their education. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in all subjects, acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding quickly.
- Recent developments have led to an improving picture of pupils' attainment. While attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 was broadly average in 2015, these pupils had made accelerated progress over the last two years because the quality of teaching had improved. Pupils currently in the school are set challenging targets and the vast majority are on track to reach or exceed the attainment expected for their age.
- Pupils' progress is good in a range of subjects. They produce good quality art work and have well-developed skills in physical education. In history, they confidently draw conclusions from historical evidence. In science, older pupils write accurate reports showing a good understanding of how to set up a hypothesis and carry out fair investigations.
- Leaders have successfully speeded up the progress of the most-able pupils to help them fulfil their potential. As a result, the proportion working beyond the expected levels for their age has increased significantly over the last two years. These pupils are challenged well and develop a good range of numeracy and literacy skills which they apply well in different subjects.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils has improved greatly in the last two years. Disadvantaged pupils are now making good or better progress across the school and are attaining as well as their classmates and all pupils nationally. Consequently, the comparatively large gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school in 2014 Key Stage 2 national tests is no longer evident.
- Different groups in the school make good progress most of the time, although occasionally less-able pupils who have fallen behind and need to catch up are given work that is too hard for them. When this happens, their progress slows. In contrast, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. They are well supported in their learning through the effective deployment of teaching assistants, who are well trained in delivering intervention programmes. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points and, in the current Year 6, most are on track to reach at least the expected level for their age by the end of the academic year.
- Pupils explore investigations and problems well in mathematics because their depth of knowledge and understanding is secure. Pupils read confidently and write with enthusiasm. A focus on improving boys' writing has raised its profile and boys have been successful in developing their skills more quickly. The school recognises that pupils do not spell accurately enough. Staff have made a start at tackling this issue by introducing tri-weekly spelling sessions, but pupils do not yet apply these skills well enough in their other work.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117259
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001902

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	238
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tina Dickens
<b>Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge</b>	Alex Evans
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 620555
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.pixmore.herts.sch.uk">www.pixmore.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@pixmore.herts.sch.uk">admin@pixmore.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11–12 September 2013

## Information about this school

- This is an average-sized junior school with eight single-age classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to looked after children and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There were many staff changes in September 2014, including the appointment of a new leadership team to work with the headteacher.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 16 lessons, five of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 90 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to an inspection questionnaire from 38 members of staff.

## Inspection team

Mike Capper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Liz Kissane

Ofsted Inspector

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