

Wilbury Junior School

Bedford Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4DU

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership has not been rigorous enough to rapidly drive the improvement needed since the last inspection.
- The achievement of pupils requires improvement. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who make expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is below national expectations. Not enough pupils make more than expected progress in these subjects by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Until recently, teachers have not received good advice on the expectations of the quality of their teaching and how to meet these. The quality of teaching has not been good enough.
- The curriculum has been too limited to ensure that pupils learn well in all subjects. Some subjects have not been taught in a way that meets the needs of all pupils.
- Some middle leaders are not fully effective in improving the quality of teaching and the outcomes for pupils in their subject areas.
- In some classes, teachers' weak subject knowledge limits pupils' understanding and so hampers progress. More-able pupils are not provided with the right level of challenge to accelerate their progress and ensure that they reach higher levels of attainment.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively in classrooms to support the learning of vulnerable pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has united the staff in the drive to raise standards. She is rapidly driving forward improvements in behaviour and in the quality of teaching.
- Secure systems are now in place for assessing pupils' learning and tracking their progress in mathematics and English. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are now being identified and addressed.
- Pupils are well cared for and arrangements for keeping them safe are effective. Pupils say their behaviour has improved and they feel safe in school.
- The governing body is well led by a new chair, and it provides effective support and challenge to the headteacher.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise the attainment of pupils by ensuring that teachers:
 - improve their subject knowledge, especially in grammar and mathematics, so that pupils understand what they have to do to use key skills appropriately and develop their knowledge
 - explain clearly to pupils how they can do well and what the purpose is of the activity they are engaged in
 - provide pupils with work that is at the right level of challenge to engage them and move their learning on
 - use resources effectively, including teaching assistants, so that pupils are well supported to make expected and better than expected progress in lessons and over time.

- Develop the quality of leadership and increase the pace of change and improvement by:
 - developing the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils and to interest and engage them so that they become enthusiastic learners
 - ensuring that all subject leaders have the skills necessary to monitor and improve the quality of teaching in their areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The leadership of the school, including governance, has undergone a marked change in the last 18 months. After a period of instability, two joint interim headteachers were appointed in January 2015. One of these became the substantive headteacher in September 2015. With strong support from the governing body, the new headteacher has created the capacity, the drive and the vision to build a school with high expectations of pupils and staff where all can thrive and succeed.
- Middle leaders are not fully effective in raising achievement in the areas they lead. They are beginning to develop the skills needed to monitor and challenge the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility while maintaining the positive culture and strong ethos created by the new headteacher.
- Teaching is improving because leaders now have in place the rigorous checks on its quality needed to move it on. Systems to manage staff performance have recently been implemented and teachers' targets are linked closely both to the progress of their pupils and to the improvement of their own practice.
- The headteacher has used external support effectively to help staff start to make the improvements necessary, for example in ensuring that assessments are accurate and that activities are planned to accelerate the progress of pupils. Staff training is now frequent and teachers are encouraged to visit and collaborate with staff from good and outstanding schools to support the development of their own practice.
- More effective use is being made of the pupil premium funding to offer extra support to eligible pupils, such as early morning lessons. A family support worker and a well-being manager have recently been appointed to ensure that more-vulnerable children have the support they need in order to make the most of their time in school. School records show that they are starting to have a positive impact on the attendance and behaviour of the pupils they are working with.
- Senior leaders are making the changes necessary to improve and accelerate pupils' learning. Behaviour at the school has been transformed. Behaviour management systems now focus on positive ways of helping pupils to control their own behaviour both in and out of the classroom. Pupils feel listened to and appreciate the calmer atmosphere around school. Teachers promote tolerance, equality and respect and relationships between staff and pupils are generally positive.
- School leaders have recognised that the curriculum is too limited and is holding back the progress of pupils. Art and technology lessons have already been introduced and there are firm plans in place to extend the curriculum to excite and engage pupils from September 2016. Creative days have been used this year to enrich the curriculum for pupils, for example the 'Art Day', when the work of four different artists was explored by all pupils across the school, resulting in them creating their own self-portraits. This broader curriculum, which allows pupils to develop understanding of different cultures and prepares them well for life in modern Britain, is improving rapidly.
- Governors and the headteacher know this school and its pupils inside out. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is entirely accurate. They know what requires improvement and, importantly, what to do to make the necessary changes so that all pupils make sustained progress to raise standards.
- Sports funding has been used effectively to increase opportunities for pupils to participate in physical activities at lunchtime and after school. Pupils have the chance to compete against other schools and the boys' and the girls' football teams are starting to enjoy success in these competitions. Attendance at extra-curricular sports clubs is closely monitored and is increasing.
- The local authority has worked closely with the leadership of the school putting into place a partnership with a local outstanding school to support improvement. It has provided subject specialists in English and mathematics to work with subject leaders within school to develop the effectiveness of teaching. It has also ensured that teachers' judgements on how well their pupils are doing are accurate.
- A close working relationship with the infant school means that pupils settle quickly into the junior school. There are frequent opportunities for both staff and pupils to visit before they start at the school. The transition to secondary school provides pupils with an opportunity to visit their next school and information is shared well between the schools.
- Most parents recognise that the changes at the school are positive and say they feel more welcome in school. Nonetheless, a few disagree, mainly because they do not feel well enough informed about what is happening or how well their children are doing.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body has changed considerably over the past 18 months, with new leadership and several new members. This has ensured that it has the right set of skills in order to carry out its statutory duties and core functions effectively and to a high standard. Governors have undertaken regular training and learned from the good practice of other local governing bodies.
 - Governors provide strong support, with an equal level of challenge, to the headteacher. They are fully involved in establishing the priorities for change and the strategic planning needed to make this happen.
 - Governors are keenly aware that the standards pupils achieve need to rise rapidly. Robust systems are now in place to ensure that governors are able to oversee that any salary progression for teachers is clearly linked to, and dependent upon, the quality of their work and how well they help pupils achieve.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements have recently been reviewed by governors. They are robust and meet statutory requirements. The right checks are made on the suitability of staff to be employed at the school. Staff and governor training is up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable and not enough of it is good. This accounts for the poor levels of attainment reached by different year groups from their varying starting points in Year 3. Poor quality of teaching in the past has left gaps in pupils' knowledge. More effective assessment by teachers is now identifying these gaps and extra support is provided to help pupils catch up.
- Teachers do not always have secure subject knowledge, especially in grammar and mathematics, so they do not explain new learning clearly. As a result some pupils become confused and do not make progress. Others lose interest and become distracted, which affects the learning of other pupils in the classroom.
- Resources are not always used effectively to support pupils' learning. For example, information presented to pupils on classroom whiteboards is often difficult to read and displays designed to support learning are out of date. In mathematics lessons, pupils do not always have access to the variety of resources to support their different ways of learning.
- Teaching assistants are not used effectively in all lessons. Some teachers do not provide guidance to direct teaching assistants to support pupils, so their support is not well matched to pupils' needs. Although teaching assistants are invited to join in with training opportunities in school, they have had no specific training to help them develop their own practice, whether supporting individual pupils or working with small groups.
- Activities in lessons do not provide the right level of challenge for all groups of pupils. At times, more-able pupils are left waiting for others to finish a task before they are allowed to move on to the next stage of the lesson. Pupils demonstrate that they relish the opportunity to choose the degree of difficulty of a task for themselves, but these opportunities are too infrequent. The recently introduced 'warm, hot, boiling and scorching' tasks worked effectively during the inspection when pupils were presented with this choice of challenge in lessons.
- Pupils use the time when they first arrive at school to review their learning from the previous day. This gives them a calm and focused start to the day. Teachers give pupils regular feedback about their work which is increasingly effective in helping them to make progress.
- Teachers are now using a greater range of methods and approaches to capture and sustain pupils' engagement in lessons. Pupils told inspectors that lessons are more interesting now. In one Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils were thoroughly enjoying working together on tasks to solve a problem. They said this was because 'it felt like a game and made learning fun'.
- Teachers now have time to plan lessons together, which is leading to greater consistency within year groups and allowing teachers to share specialist knowledge. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher and their work is focused on accelerating pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Attendance remains below the national average, although there are early signs of improvement in the attendance of vulnerable pupils following the appointment of a family support worker. Although good attendance is now rewarded, this system has not been in place long enough to have had an impact.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe whether, for example, they are using the internet or crossing the road.
- Pupils feel that their school is a safe place. They told inspectors that there are far fewer incidents of bullying now and that unkind name calling and racist remarks will be taken seriously and dealt with by teachers. There are clear procedures in place for dealing with bullying, which include following up all incidents with parents. Pupils feel more confident that when they report an incident it will be dealt with effectively. School records show that the number of incidents of bullying has dropped significantly over the last year.
- A better developed curriculum to support the emotional development of pupils, as well as personal, social and health education, is planned for September 2016. Some strands of this, such as lessons to help pupils form positive relationships with each other, are already underway. As a result, they are developing an understanding of tolerance and how to celebrate their differences.
- Pupils have voted for representatives on the school council, which has the opportunity to influence decision making in the school. For example, pupils were involved in interviewing the newly appointed deputy headteacher. This is helping pupils understand how British values, such as democracy, work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils try their best in lessons when teachers have high expectations and provide them with interesting activities. Too often, when pupils begin to lose their focus on learning, teachers do not act quickly or effectively to tackle this and so the learning of other pupils in the class is affected. Some classrooms are very noisy and pupils told inspectors that, at times, they find it difficult to concentrate, which slows their progress.
- The school now has a well-developed behaviour policy that is consistently used by all staff. Over the last four terms, the number of incidents of poor behaviour has decreased. The number of exclusions has also reduced considerably. Most pupils are seen to behave appropriately in a variety of situations and are developing positive attitudes to their learning.
- Play in the playground at lunchtimes is well supervised and most pupils show consideration for each other and play together well. However, the dining hall is very noisy and some pupils say they do not enjoy eating their lunch there.
- The few pupils who have lapses in maintaining a good level of behaviour are well managed, and effective strategies are now used to ensure that incidents do not escalate and affect the learning of other pupils.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- From their varying individual starting points, a significant proportion of pupils across the school do not make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2015, not enough pupils made the progress expected of them in mathematics, reading and writing. Few pupils made better than expected progress. This is because they have not received good teaching in the past, especially in mathematics.
- The standards reached at the end of Key Stage 2 were below those of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils did not do as well as their classmates. From their different starting points, their progress was slower. Current information on how well these pupils are doing shows that they are now beginning to catch up with other pupils in school and gaps are closing steadily.
- The improvement in the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is similar to that of other groups. The specific provision for these pupils is strengthening because of the improvements made to leadership. Progress is not accelerating as rapidly as it could, because leaders do not have

enough understanding of which of the activities provided for these pupils are having the most impact on their progress and outcomes.

- Not enough pupils attain higher standards in mathematics, reading and writing by the end of Key Stage 2. More-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons and so they do not make the sustained rapid progress necessary for them to reach these higher levels.
- Information provided by the school on the current progress of Year 6 pupils indicates that better teaching and changes to the curriculum will lead to improved outcomes for them at the end of the academic year. Outcomes will, however, remain below the standards achieved nationally. The trend is one of continuing improvement because pupils are making better progress, in the lower year groups, as they move through the school.
- Progress is also accelerating because the accurate assessment information is used to identify pupils who have gaps in their knowledge. These pupils then receive extra support from their teachers in small-group sessions before school.
- The current quality of teaching is stronger across the school and is beginning to accelerate the progress of pupils. Work in pupils' books shows that higher expectations are having an impact on the quality of work pupils are producing and so they are making better progress, especially in their writing.

School details

Unique reference number	117121
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10001911

This inspection 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	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Natasha Parkhouse
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Elsbeth Shaw
Telephone number	01462 620410
Website	www.wilbury.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@wilbury.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 November 2013

Information about this school

- Wilbury Junior School is larger than the average primary school.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is above average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The school has been through a period of turmoil and instability over the past five years. The current headteacher was appointed as joint interim headteacher from January 2015 with the headteacher of Icknield Infant School. She became the substantive headteacher of the school in September 2015.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 25 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, listened to pupils read and held discussions with groups of pupils about their learning and experience of school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour, the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement, as well as procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and the school's education improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke to parents dropping their children at school in the morning and took account of 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's own parent surveys.
- Inspectors considered six answers to the online pupil questionnaire and 21 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Lesley Daniel, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Kissane	Ofsted Inspector

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