

Heybridge Primary School

Rowan Drive, Maldon, Essex CM9 4TU

Inspection dates	7–8 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Heybridge Primary School is a good school. It has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. The weaknesses identified then have been tackled quickly and effectively.
- With the advice of the academy chain, school leaders, including governors, made important changes fundamental to move the school forward.
- The governing body is effective. Governors have an accurate view of the school.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created a culture of high expectations for all. As a result, the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils are good.
- Leaders in English and mathematics have driven rapid improvement in their subjects.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is tailored to each individual's unique needs. As a result, these pupils thrive.
- The curriculum stimulates pupils' curiosity and thirst for learning.
- Teachers guide pupils to reflect on the progress they have made and the next steps in their learning. Pupils tackle the interesting activities they are given enthusiastically. As a result, progress in reading, writing and mathematics is much improved since the previous inspection.
- Skilled learning support assistants form effective teams with the teachers they support.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They respond very positively to all the school offers and live the 'Heybridge pledge' in their daily lives.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils say they feel happy and safe in school and that staff care for them well. Parents overwhelmingly agree.
- The early years provision is good. Children settle quickly and make good progress. As a result, they enter Year 1 fully prepared for the next stage in their learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not of a universally high standard in all classes.
- Foundation subject leaders are yet to make significant impact on standards in their subjects.
- The school does not give parents the information they need to be full and active partners in aspects of their children's learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further share good practice within the school to bring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment up to the standard of the best, so pupils make sustained and consistent good progress.
- Develop the leadership capacity further by ensuring middle leaders for foundation subjects quickly become as effective as those of English and mathematics.
- Support parents to be more involved in their children's learning by providing precise information about homework and the progress their children are making.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Heybridge provides a good quality education for its pupils. Furthermore, the headteacher, other leaders, staff and governors share a strong determination to see the school build further on this solid foundation.
- Many parents and staff say the leadership of the school is much improved since the previous inspection. They noticed a positive improvement under the interim headteacher, particularly in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. They say this momentum has continued under the permanent headteacher. One parent, typical of many, said, 'The school has come on in leaps and bounds'. Two years ago, six in every ten parents responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, indicated that they agreed the school was well led and managed. This year, this proportion has increased to nine in every ten.
- The strong culture of endeavour, clearly embedded in the school values, is the foundation for many improvements. Pupils' personal development benefits particularly because they know, understand and closely follow the 'Heybridge pledge'.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form an effective team with complementary skills. They regularly check the work of the school. This information is used effectively to evaluate what is working and what is not, and to make essential improvements and move the school forward.
- Skilled English and mathematics subject leaders use their good knowledge and understanding to very positive effect. As a result, provision and pupils' progress in these subjects has improved. Leadership of most other subjects, however, is still in its infancy and some leaders are new and yet to have an impact on standards in the subjects they lead.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is highly effective. Accurate identification and close monitoring means these pupils receive the right support. Parents particularly praise the school's careful actions to meet each pupil's individual needs. As a result, these pupils thrive.
- Much is done to ensure that pupils enjoy equal opportunities and benefit from all the school offers. For example, all visits, extra-curricular activities and other wider opportunities are open to all pupils.
- The curriculum is well planned. In English and mathematics particularly, because subject leadership is so strong, good links are made with other subjects. As a result, basic skills in these important subjects are reinforced and extended using real and relevant activities.
- Assessment is accurate and used effectively to monitor pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics particularly. Leaders hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. They ensure that the vast majority of pupils make good progress. They have not yet, however, ironed-out the lack of parity in the quality of teaching between some classes, so progress in one can be quicker than another.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because it is promoted well in the curriculum. Assemblies are seen as special times when the school community comes together, often to celebrate each other's achievements.
- Pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain is promoted well because values such as respect and tolerance are taught, practiced and celebrated in the daily life of the school. Pupils' opinions are sought and considered when staff make decisions.
- Leaders effectively target the use of pupil premium funding (additional government funding) where it is most needed. Extra, good-quality help promotes the good academic achievement of these pupils. Funding also ensures that no pupil misses out on wider opportunities, such as visits.
- The primary school sports funding is used effectively, both to give pupils a wider range of opportunities and to train staff. Pupils understand how to stay healthy and enjoy being active.
- Effective links with other local schools benefit pupils. For example, schools combine to provide speech and language screening to all pupils during their first years in school. Staff from these schools also work together to check their assessments.
- Useful support from the multi-academy trust, in specialist areas such as finance, enables the school to be efficient. Training and advice for school leaders is seen as beneficial, too.
- The relationship with parents is strong. Parents like the fact that the headteacher and deputy headteacher are available at the school gates most mornings. Parents are keen to play a full and active role in their children's education and broader school life. Nearly every parent responding to Parent View would recommend the school. However, some are unsure of the school's expectations, particularly in homework. Others feel the information they receive does not enable them to fully support their children's learning.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body is effective. It benefits from the wide range of expertise and experience that individual governors bring to the group, for example in early years and risk assessment.
 - Governors work closely with the headteacher and staff to help maintain the impetus of improvement and ensure that the school provides a good education for pupils.
 - Checks on the progress of pupils are analysed very closely to ensure that pupils do well, and to question and challenge leaders if they do not. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve.
 - Governors oversee the performance of staff, including teachers, rigorously. Decisions about pay increases are based on a good range of evidence.
 - Thorough oversight of the school's finances, including the use of additional funding, helps the school achieve good value for money.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders and governors ensure that all staff training is up to date and that the school fully complies with the latest safeguarding guidance. Governors and school staff are fully aware of their duty to keep pupils safe, and know who to refer to if they have a concern. The school clearly explains to parents its role in safeguarding their children, and works closely with parents to ensure that their children are well supported and safe from harm. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View agree that their children are well looked after and feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall. Teachers form an effective team and collaborate well. Staff morale is good; teachers say they feel the headteacher demands their best, but also gives them the support and guidance to achieve it.
- Relationships between pupils themselves, and with the staff who teach them, are positive. As a result, there are few interruptions to learning. Pupils confidently answer questions because they know that 'having a go' is commended.
- Teachers' questions effectively promote pupils' learning. For example, they check pupils understand and are ready to move on; a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teachers follow the school's marking and assessment policy closely. Every day starts with an opportunity for pupils to correct and reflect on any mistakes. Again, this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection and demonstrates how effectively leaders improve teaching.
- Learning support assistants make a strong contribution to learning. Every moment is used productively. They are well trained in the learning programmes they use to give struggling pupils extra help. They are skilled at giving pupils just enough help to ensure they can figure out what to do for themselves.
- Teachers use discussion well to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills. In most lessons, staff provide opportunities for pupils to share ideas and clarify their thinking. Pupils give each other opinions about their work, and reasons for those opinions.
- Reading is taught well. Staff teach phonics (the link between letters and sounds) effectively right from when children first start in the early years. Pupils are taught to use these skills successfully. When writing, for example, pupils will be heard sounding out words to help spell them. This is built on well as pupils develop more advanced skills. For example, they reflect on how they think particular characters in a story might be feeling, and what they might do next.
- Writing skills are taught well and practised in real and relevant opportunities in other subjects, an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils say they look forward to the regular whole-school writing themes, introduced imaginatively so pupils are enthused to write.
- Mathematics is taught consistently well throughout the school because staff training, for example in how to promote pupils' reasoning skills, is effective.
- Pupils respond very positively to staff's high expectations that they will take pride in the presentation of their work. Handwriting is much improved since the last monitoring visit because the staff now teach a particular approach. Pupils respond positively and write neatly, using well-formed letters.
- School leaders rigorously check the quality of teaching and tailor training to meet each individual's needs. Teachers respond positively to advice. In mathematics, outstanding teaching is shared, for example in how to promote pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. As a result, there is parity in this respect among classes. However, teachers are given limited opportunities such as these to learn from one another.

- Homework includes a good balance between practising basic skills such as multiplication tables and giving pupils choice of more open-ended activities they can immerse themselves in. However, some parents say they do not fully understand what is expected of them or their children, while others say their children rarely receive homework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View feel their child is happy at school.
- Pupils clearly understand the meaning of 'identity' and can describe themselves by their interests, religion and groups they belong to. In assembly, they give thoughtful answers to the question, 'Can a country have values?' Pupils understand 'community' and know they have both rights and responsibilities in the school community. They participate in the local community, for example singing carols for senior citizens.
- The school strongly encourages positive attitudes to learning. Pupils know their school 'pledge'. They understand what it means and follow it in their daily lives, for example to 'aspire to be like someone you look up to'. They say the school values include 'honesty', 'hard work' and 'caring'. Pupils understand because staff use real and relevant examples that are meaningful to pupils.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in their own learning. For example, when their teachers' marking asks them to do extra work, they do so willingly and recognise these are important opportunities to learn and improve.
- Pupils enjoy the weekly opportunities to show their learning to their parents, and discuss what they have achieved. Parents spoken to also appreciate these events.
- The school promotes and rewards good learning traits and high attendance through public recognition of pupils' achievements. The school encourages parents to attend these special 'Heybridge proud' assemblies, reinforcing their importance.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to play a meaningful role in the life of the school, for example as 'play leaders'. During the inspection, members of the school council gave a presentation on road safety. This was well written and highly relevant to pupils, for example giving information about how children must avoid distracting drivers, and the potential consequences if they do. A short video clip about the dangers of running across the road also clearly left an impact.
- Pupils' thorough understanding of safety develops well because they are given many lessons, some at the secondary school, involving different skills and scenarios. From safe cycling to the safe use of the internet, pupils have a good awareness of their own safety and that of others. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View agreed their children feel safe at Heybridge.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Nearly every parent responding to Parent View believes the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved. A large majority also agree the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. However, a small proportion, largely boys, can struggle to manage their own behaviour. Occasionally, and for appropriate reasons, pupils are excluded from school.
- Pupils learn and play together well. In lessons, the many opportunities to work with others promote speaking and listening skills. Pupils listen respectfully and respond thoughtfully to one another. In particular, pairs are regularly changed so that, over time, pupils work with all class members, not just their friends.
- Pupils' pride in their school is strong. They take pleasure in representing their school, for example in a mathematics competition.
- Pupils say that bullying rarely happens, but when it does staff are really good at resolving it. Pupils say that they are confident there is an adult at school they can talk to if they are worried.
- Attendance is broadly average. Staff monitor absence and lateness closely, and have reduced the latter particularly. Pupils respond positively to the rewards for high attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection, particularly in mathematics and more recently in writing. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View agree their children are making good progress. Parents say the quality and quantity of their children's school work improved soon after the arrival of the interim headteacher, and has continued to gather momentum since the appointment of the permanent headteacher.
- The school's checks on progress, and the quality of work in pupils' books, show that the vast majority of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils currently in the school generally learn in two terms what they are expected to learn in two and a half terms.
- These improvements are the result of leaders taking effective action so that pupils make faster progress and reach higher standards. This has a positive and cumulative effect. For example, improvements mean that the proportion of children leaving the early years with a good level of development is higher than previously. This stronger foundation gives pupils a more advanced start for teachers to build on in Year 1.
- The proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average in 2015. This improvement has been brought about by better teaching.
- The inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' progress reported at the previous inspection mean that, even though teaching is now good, it has not been so over time, particularly for the older pupils. As a result, these pupils have a legacy of lower standards.
- Reading standards have improved since the previous inspection because the school has introduced a more cohesive approach to the teaching of early reading skills, including phonics.
- In writing, standards have improved because tasks are relevant and interesting, especially to previously reluctant writers. Staff stimulate pupils' imagination, for example teaching pupils how to use writing to create an emotional reaction, using phrases such as 'the smell of freshly cut grass'. Pupils draft and redraft their writing. When they compare their finished work with their starting point, they clearly see the improvements made, and feed off their success in their next writing.
- In mathematics, tasks involve many opportunities to reason and problem-solve. Pupils deepen their understanding of basic skills such as calculation by using and applying them. The previous inspection found two weaknesses: limited opportunities to tackle mathematical problems, and relatively poor mental mathematics skills. Both have been fully addressed by improved provision and better teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress similar to their peers, and in some cases better than that. The school accurately assesses any academic need they have, provides extra help matched to it, checks if it is effective and changes it if not.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress, although often from lower starting points. Their needs are quickly identified and high-quality help provided.
- The most able pupils make good progress because the work they are given is at the right level of difficulty; neither too hard nor too easy.

Early years provision

is good

- Most children enter the early years with skills and knowledge typical for their age. Some are above this, often with very good general knowledge. A small but significant proportion have special educational needs, most often speech, language and communication needs.
- Children, including those who are most able and those who have special educational needs or disability, make good progress. Effective use of a speech and language specialist enables these children's needs to be assessed accurately and staff to receive extra training. The most able children have the harder work they need because they join Year 1 for specific lessons, including phonics.
- Over the past two years, the proportion reaching a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1 has improved dramatically and in 2015 it was well above the national average. The school's checks and inspection evidence suggests that the proportion will be similar this year. This increase is due largely to the effective actions taken by leaders, including governors.
- Children's attitudes to learning are positive. Each day they arrive keen and eager to find out what interesting activities await them. They settle quickly, concentrate well and try hard. In phonics, for example, they rise to the challenge of hard work and are very keen to succeed.

- Each day's activities are planned using detailed and accurate assessments of each child's progress and needs. Children's interests are considered, too. Displays of children's work celebrate their achievements, for example writing is neat and content varied.
- Children behave well. They respond positively to staff and each other. They sustain concentration and show interest in the varied activities. They are imaginative and cooperative.
- Teaching is good. Staff use open-ended questions, for example when the children are exploring the 'travel agents', to encourage and extend children's thinking. Staff use every opportunity to promote basic skills, such as phonics. Adults use correct terminology and have high expectations children will, too. Children have many opportunities to read, write and use number inside but less so in the outdoors. Outdoor provision generally is not of the same high standard as indoors. The school knows this and has appropriate improvement plans.
- Staff work very closely with the on-site setting to fully prepare children for school, so their transition is smooth. Staff work together to ensure many aspects of provision are similar. This is highly beneficial to children and their parents. Children coming from further afield, too, receive good preparation for school. Transition to Year 1 is equally smooth.
- Relationships with parents are strong. Parents very much appreciate all that is done to prepare their children for school, and to see they settle quickly. As elsewhere in the school, parents appreciate the weekly opportunities to view their children's work, and have them explain their learning.
- Good leadership of the early years ensures provision meets the needs of all children. Staff ensure children's safety with constant vigilance and regular reminders to children about their safety. Expertise from the academy chain has supported improvements in provision. Key skills are taught more methodically, and children have many more opportunities to pursue their own interests. Leaders also draw on the expertise of other outstanding early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	138994
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10011873

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Young
Headteacher	Simon Waltham
Telephone number	01621 854082
Website	www.heybridge-tkat.org
Email address	admin@heybridge-tkat.org
Date of previous inspection	12–13 June 2014

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The school has nine classes: one Reception class, one Year 1 class, two Year 2 classes, one Year 3 class, one Year 4 class, a mixed-age Year 4 and 5 class, and two mixed Year 5 and 6 classes.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below average. This is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2015. There has been a relatively high turnover of staff since the previous inspection.
- In December 2012, the school became an academy, sponsored by TKAT.
- An independent pre-school operates on the school site and is inspected separately.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classrooms. Some observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors observed pupils in other activities and as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, and governors. The inspectors also spoke to a representative from the academy sponsor, TKAT.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 43 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information. These included the school development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. They also looked at arrangements for and records of safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Janet Tomkins

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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