

The Grove Junior School

Dark Lane, Harpenden, AL5 1QB

Inspection dates 7–8 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is good because attainment is above average when pupils start school and it is better than expected when they leave the school at the age of 11.
- The progress of pupils in English and mathematics is good in all years and outstanding in some.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making good or better progress.
- Pupils feel safe and are exceptionally well behaved. They enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning.
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteachers, deputy headteacher and middle leaders have worked exceptionally hard to make rapid improvements to the school since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is now good throughout the school and in some classes outstanding.
- Governors work exceptionally hard to enable all pupils to achieve well and provide outstanding support and robust challenge to the senior leadership team.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- At times teachers do not probe pupils' understanding enough through asking questions that make them think deeply.
- More-able pupils do not always have enough chance to take risks or make choices for themselves about their learning.

Information about this inspection

- The Inspectors observed 25 lessons taught by 14 different teachers. Four of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteachers.
- Inspectors looked at books in lessons, listened to pupils read and spoke to children about their work.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at assessment information, attendance records, the school’s improvement plan, the school’s self-evaluation, safeguarding information, parent letters, local community letters, a wide range of policies and governing body documentation.
- At the time of the inspection there were 97 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and inspectors also spoke to several parents about the school. Inspectors examined 21 questionnaires about the school completed by staff. All their views were considered by the inspectors.

Inspection team

Gill Ellyard, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Natasha Campbell

Additional Inspector

David Belsey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly larger-than-average junior school and the number on roll has increased since the last inspection.
- A small proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding from the government for pupils in local authority care, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families). There are no looked-after children or pupils from service families in the school.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Almost all pupils transfer from the infant school on the same site.
- All but one class of children are taught in single-age classes. Building works are currently taking place to extend the school which will enable all classes to be single-age in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by making sure that teachers:
 - give more-able pupils the chance to take risks and to direct their learning more themselves
 - probe pupils' thinking through more challenging and open-ended questioning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved rapidly since the last inspection. This is because of a vast improvement in the quality of teaching and revised topics making learning interesting and fun. The majority of pupils enter the school with above-average standards. By the time pupils leave the school, standards are high.
- Pupils of all ages are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, with some making outstanding progress. The school has a clear focus on improving basic skills which is reflected through its topics, wall displays and extra activities to enhance learning.
- The pupil premium has been used creatively and effectively to give extra learning opportunities to pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result of this support, the progress of these pupils is very good and catching up with others of the same age. For example, pupils eligible for free school meals reach levels in English and mathematics above those for similar pupils, but about half a term below those of other pupils in the school. Nonetheless, the gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and that of other pupils is narrowing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making good progress. The school's nurturing environment means that children receive high quality support enabling them to thrive in this fully inclusive school. A number of support programmes are in place, led and managed by the inclusion leader and ably supported by skilled teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching is good

- There has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. In 2010 the vast majority of teaching was judged to be either satisfactory or inadequate. This percentage has now been turned on its head, with the vast majority of teaching being judged as good or outstanding with inadequate teaching eradicated. This is as a direct result of the leadership's drive and commitment to raise standards and challenge underperformance.
- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is at least good, with some outstanding teaching. As a result of this, standards are extremely high with good progress being made, evident in lessons and in the pupils' books. However, some of the more-able pupils do not have enough opportunities to take risks and make choices about their learning themselves.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers have high expectations of the pupils and challenge them with more in-depth questioning and open-ended learning opportunities. This is not happening routinely in all classes, however, so that pupils are not always challenged to extend their thinking through skilful questioning.
- The school's homework programme is thorough and provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. The vast majority of parents agree that their child is provided with appropriate homework.
- The whole school-marking policy is consistently applied. Teachers give praise and encouragement, but also clarity in what pupils need to do to improve their work. Pupils understand the marking system and respond to their teachers' comments.

- The behaviour of pupils in lessons is exemplary. Teachers make sure that these high standards are maintained by following and carrying out the school's policy and procedures consistently. This creates a good climate for learning.
- Teachers and support staff give their time freely to support the wider work of the school. For example, at the end of the last academic year the school held an 'Oscars' celebratory evening, where the films pupils had made during their information and communication technology lessons were shown. This 'red-carpet' event was attended by the town's Mayor, parents in evening dress, staff and the pupils.
- Awards were made just as in the real Oscar ceremony (with miniature Oscar statues!), for all important roles such as best actor and best director. This fabulous evening was well received by all in attendance – in response, one parent wrote, 'It's the open and creative things our children are doing that make the school such a great place and one that we should all feel proud to be associated with'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of the pupils is exemplary, both within classrooms and around the school. Pupils are extremely polite and courteous, they are welcoming and greet visitors with a smile. As one prospective parent wrote, 'The children are a credit to the school, they did a fantastic job of showing me round and handled the multitude of questions thrown at them with such maturity and exceptional manners'.
- This exceptionally good behaviour is also commented on by a number of community groups when children have taken part in festivals, competitions and events within the local community.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are extremely positive and they enjoy their lessons and are keen to do their very best. They are proud of their work and their class achievements and represent their school with great pride.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, they are fully aware of the potential dangers when using computers to access the internet or when using mobile phones for sending messages and, for example, they know how important it is to keep passwords secret.
- Pupils play co-operatively with each other, assisted by a range of equipment and different play zones. A peer-mediation system is operated by fully trained year 6 pupils. The peer mediators help to resolve friendship issues or minor disputes on the playground.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, including physical abuse, name-calling and cyber bullying. The vast majority of parents and pupils speak of very few incidents of bullying at the school. Pupils feel that such incidents are dealt with quickly and to the satisfaction of all involved.
- Governors, staff and pupils feel that the school is a safe place and this is endorsed by the responses to Parent View where all parents agreed. There are robust arrangements to make sure pupils are safe at school. All of the 97 parents who responded to Parent View would have no hesitation in recommending this school to another parent.
- Attendance at the school is high and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they are punctual and keen to extend their school day by attending the

numerous clubs and activities available. The school takes appropriate action and works with families when attendance issues arise.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The leadership of both headteachers and their deputy is exemplary. Their relentless drive to improve teaching and learning since the last inspection has been successful and the school and its community are now reaping the benefits. Pupils' progress has rapidly improved due to an improvement in the quality of teaching, which is checked regularly and robustly. Targeted training supports individuals and there is a 'can do' attitude amongst all the staff.
- Leaders have carried out well-focused improvement plans which are based on a robust assessment of the school along with clear policies and procedures to make sure practice is consistent throughout.
- The senior leadership team are supported by a strong team of other managers, all of whom can show clearly the impact of actions taken and the capacity to bring about further improvement. Their hard work is reflected in the improved achievement of pupils and the improved quality in teaching. The inclusion leader has worked relentlessly to improve the provision and attainment of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and, as a result, many pupils make good or better progress.
- The pupil premium has been creatively used, for example teachers are released to carry out a mentoring role where they meet with parents and the child on a termly basis to provide additional support and advice. The impact of this has been an improvement in the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals and a closing of the gap with other pupils. Among the range of initiatives, the school also provides mathematics, reading, writing and language support.
- The school's ethos results in pupils having a clear set of values, principles and beliefs. Pupils have a wide understanding and awareness of the beliefs of others and this is represented in a number of colourful and interactive displays of pupils' work around the school. During one literacy lesson observed, children watched and listened to a speech made by Martin Luther King and were able to make responsible, reasoned judgements and comments relating to a moral dilemma. This contributes extremely well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Subjects and topics are suitably enriched by a wide range of additional activities, after-school clubs and residential trips that broaden pupils' horizons. These range from learning Spanish to street dance. Pupils enjoy a rich programme of educational visits to museums, theatres, religious places of worship and have close links with an urban school with a more diverse cultural population, sharing and swapping their experiences.
- Assemblies offer good opportunities for reflection and help pupils to understand the needs of their school and wider community in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony. The school fosters good relations and tackles discrimination effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely active and hold the headteachers and leaders of the school to account. Governors have an exceptionally detailed knowledge and understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They know the schools' strengths and areas needing improvement. This is because there is a detailed and robust programme of link-governor visits, meetings and involvement in whole-school events, including newsletters to

parents and questionnaires.

- Governors have a full understanding regarding the use of the pupil premium and the pay and performance of teachers and monitor this carefully. They know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance.
- The school's budget is kept under tight review and there are clear procedures and policies in place which were highlighted as strengths during a recent financial audit.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures meet all requirements and are monitored regularly by the responsible governor.

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	117258
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401659

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	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Heritage
Headteacher	Pippa Bremner and Janice Tearle
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2010
Telephone number	01582 760031
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