

Micklem Primary School

Boxted Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2QH

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well from below-average starting points. Attainment in Year 6 has risen and a larger proportion of pupils now exceed the levels expected of them. This is because most make much better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers provide a purposeful learning environment and plan interesting and stimulating lessons so that pupils are excited to learn.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and feel safe and secure in school.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, other leaders and the governing body, has been very successful in improving the quality of teaching and in raising achievement across the school.
- Governors are knowledgeable and track the work of the school closely. They are effective in supporting school development and in holding leaders to account for pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, teachers do not use information about what pupils already know and can do effectively to set challenging work for all groups of pupils.
- The marking of pupils' work is variable in quality and does not always show pupils how to improve their work.
- Pupils are not consistently given opportunities to follow up teachers' marking to improve their work.
- The new subject leaders do not play enough part in checking and improving the quality of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 14 lessons, of which one was observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and learning areas. The inspectors also listened to pupils in Years 2 and 6 reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 32 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 26 responses to a staff questionnaire. The inspectors also spoke with parents during the inspection.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' books and at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, improvement plans, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Liz Kissane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is below average and there are a very small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school experiences high mobility of pupils. Far more pupils than average join or leave the school part way through the academic year, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- There have been significant changes in staffing, including to the senior leadership team, over the past two years and the current leadership team was not fully in place until January 2013. All current teachers joined the school within the last two years. Staffing is now stable.
- The school is a member of the local schools' consortium, which includes several local primary schools and the local secondary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use assessment information to set tasks that build on what pupils already know and understand, and that challenge all groups of pupils
 - making sure that all pupils are given clear guidance from the marking of their work on what to do to improve it, and have time to do the corrections and improvements called for.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - giving subject leaders, new to their roles, the training and opportunity to check teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility, and to take action to make improvements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Nursery and Reception with knowledge and skills that are below the levels typical for their age. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved significantly and is now consistently good. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the time they start in Year 1 is now above the national average.
- The national test result prior to 2013 declined for some groups of pupils. The new leadership team responded immediately and effectively to resolve this issue by improving the quality of teaching through rigorous checking of teaching and a robust staff-training programme. Consequently, progress has improved and standards have risen for all groups of pupils. Results went up in 2013 and, in the current school year, achievement has improved further in reading, writing and mathematics. An increasing proportion of pupils are making rapid progress.
- The most-able pupils make exceptionally rapid progress in all areas. Many of them made outstanding progress and are set to reach high levels of attainment.
- The school's data on pupils' progress in the current academic year, supported by the work seen in their books and in lessons, show that the accelerated progress in all areas has been sustained and further improved and current pupils are on track to reach high standards at the end of Year 6. The proportion exceeding the expected rate of progress has increased markedly in the current year.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was average in 2013 and the school's data suggests further improvement in the current year. A strong focus on phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) has ensured rapid progress in reading skills over the past two years. Pupils were ahead of national standards in the phonics screening check in both 2012 and 2013. Pupils' reading skills have advanced considerably across the school in the current academic year.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, most of whom are also eligible for pupil premium funding, make similar progress to that of other pupils in their classes because the school provides well-targeted support for them. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make equally good progress to that of their classmates – and sometimes better.
- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding received well-targeted support over the last two years. Consequently, most have made faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics than previously, narrowing the gap in attainment between them and their classmates. There was an attainment gap of one and half terms in writing, two terms in mathematics and two and half terms in reading in Year 6 in 2013, reduced from the previous year. The school's current data and inspection findings show that eligible pupils have made good progress consistently over the past two years from their low starting points.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly over the past two years because of good training and support for teachers. Staff provide a positive environment for learning. They have good relationships with pupils and celebrate their work. As a result, pupils want to do well, respond readily to tasks with interest, and make good progress.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage thrive in a stimulating learning environment. They thoroughly enjoy observing the life-cycle of a butterfly. For example, children in the Reception class were absolutely delighted when they saw the cocoon had hatched in the 'butterfly pavilion'.
- Teachers use effective and targeted questioning to check pupils' progress, which successfully challenges them to think more deeply about their learning. They build well on what pupils already know to enhance their understanding. In Year 6, pupils study 'The Hobbit', act out parts of the story, evaluate their performance and write their own accounts analysing the characters, which enhances their understanding of different styles of writing.
- The teaching of reading deepens pupils' understanding of styles of texts and helps them to analyse events and characters. The teaching of phonics is strong. The impact of this was seen in a Year 1 session, where a systematic approach and the use of excellent resources ensured very rapid progress for all pupils in extending their phonic skills. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers in planning and delivering this programme. They also provide effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and for those who are supported by the pupil premium.
- Teachers usually plan learning that is pitched at the right level of difficulty for all groups of pupils, but this good practice is not consistent. Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively enough to ensure that all groups of pupils are stretched to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and celebrate pupils' achievement but do not always provide clear advice on how to improve their work. Sometimes, even when such advice is given, pupils do not respond well enough to their teachers' comments, and teachers do not systematically check this is done. Therefore, pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are courteous and cooperative. The vast majority of pupils across the school have positive attitudes to learning and attend regularly. They listen to adults and to each other with respect, and work well together without disruption.
- Procedures for adults to manage pupils' behaviour are comprehensive. These are applied effectively and pupils respond well to them. Pupils believe in a set of values and principles, based on the school's positive ethos, which strongly influences their behaviour, relationships and attitudes to each other.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure that staff are rigorously checked before they are appointed. Pupils believe that they are kept safe in school and all parents who responded to the questionnaire agree with them.
- Pupils know how to stay safe, including when using the internet, when on the road, or in case of fire. They understand these hazards because the issues are often included in lessons and in assemblies.
- Pupils understand about different kinds of bullying but they state that incidents of bullying are very rare. On the rare occasions where behaviour is less than good, pupils say that this is dealt

with effectively by adults.

- Pupils willingly take on roles of responsibility within the class, and through their school council work and fundraising activities to support national and international charities. Year 6 pupils enjoy their role as playground buddies. They had been trained to take on this role by an external agency and, this year, they are training Year 5 to replace them from September. The school council is raising funds with the parents to develop a wildlife area within the school grounds.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong and persistent leadership by the headteacher, other senior leaders and governors has successfully driven improvements. Leaders communicate high expectations of what pupils can achieve and have ensured that all staff share a determination to move the school forward. The school's self-evaluation gives an accurate view of its performance.
- Leaders with responsibility for subjects, and for the Early Years Foundation Stage, contribute well to school improvement. However, those who are new to their posts have not yet had the opportunity to check the quality of teaching and learning and so make improvements in their subjects.
- Systems to monitor teachers' performance are effective. Senior leaders check the quality of teaching thoroughly and follow up any areas needing development through a robust training programme for all staff. Teachers are set challenging individual targets to improve their practice, and decisions to increase salaries are linked to the quality of their teaching and the progress pupils make in their classes.
- The curriculum has a suitably strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills and provides a wide range of activities such as playing music and book clubs, writing workshop with a visiting author and after school clubs. This contributes well to pupils' progress and enjoyment. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the teaching in different subjects, including religious studies, and by visits to museums such as the National Gallery.
- Leaders have made good progress to ensuring equality of opportunity across the school. However, they have yet to ensure that work is always equally challenging for all pupils.
- The school makes good use of the additional primary sports funding. This includes working with a specialist from a secondary school to enhance pupils' skills and teachers' expertise. This has encouraged an increased participation in inter-school competitive sports and sports clubs
- The local authority has provided effective support to the school, particularly by working with the senior leaders and governors to check on the progress and impact of the school's work. Partnerships with local schools also help the school to share and develop good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well-organised and has been strengthened by the appointment of two local authority governors. Governors make effective use of the information gained from their visits and that provided by the headteacher to hold the leaders to account. They know how pupils are performing compared with national standards and analyse the published data to

compare pupils' achievement with national figures. The governing body has a clear understanding of how underperformance is tackled to raise achievement and ensures that teachers are only rewarded if they are able to raise pupils' achievement. Governors manage the finances well and ensure that the national safeguarding requirements are met.

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	117231
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	442098

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Wickens
Headteacher	Elizabeth Ormonde
Date of previous school inspection	18 December 2012
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