

Featherstone Wood Primary School

Featherston Road, Stevenage, SG2 9PP

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the deputy head has transformed standards of behaviour and secured improvements in teaching and in pupils' achievement.
- Governors have a clear understanding of their role and ensure that they are well informed about the work of the school. They provide support and challenge to senior leaders to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Teaching overall is highly effective. Lesson activities are well planned and fully engage pupils in their work. Teachers give pupils accurate feedback to help them to make improvements.
- Leaders ensure pupils are kept safe whilst they are in school.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are courteous and respectful to each other and to adults. Disruption to learning is very rare.
- Subject leaders keep a close check on the quality of pupils' learning, thereby ensuring that standards are maintained. They provide effective support to teachers.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain through the broad range of subjects the school uses to cover this aspect of their learning.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to participate and excel in sports.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not consistently good. The information gathered from assessment is not used effectively to plan for what children need to learn next.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop the skill of enquiry in science.
- The information gathered from assessment is not used sufficiently by senior leaders and teachers to monitor the achievement of the most-able pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons. Inspectors made joint observations with senior leaders in four lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, the local authority representative, middle leaders and seven members of the governing body including the Chair.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to discuss their work and views about school. Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed them at play and at lunchtimes. Inspectors also talked to pupils in lessons.
- There were 10 responses to Ofsted’s online parent questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also analysed the school’s own parental questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke to six parents at the start of the school day.
- All members of staff were invited to complete a questionnaire; 15 responses were received and analysed by inspectors.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including: samples of pupils’ work to evaluate their progress and the quality of teachers’ assessment and marking; progress and attainment data; the school’s self-evaluation and development plan; safeguarding information; behaviour and attendance records and the governing body minutes.

Inspection team

Dellis Smith, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Prue Rayner

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Featherstone Wood Primary School is smaller than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding, which is additional funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority, is significantly above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- Children in Reception attend full time. Nursery children attend on a part-time basis.
- The school provides a breakfast club and a number of after school clubs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the time they leave Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that teachers:
 - make better use of assessment information to pinpoint what children need to learn next and to plan activities that take them forward in their learning
 - provide appropriately challenging work for the most-able pupils
- Develop pupils' skills in scientific enquiry by providing more opportunities for pupils to carry out scientific investigations.
- Senior leaders and teachers should ensure that they improve the monitoring of achievement of the most-able pupils by evaluating the attainment and progress of these pupils in the same way as other groups.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The exceptional leadership of the headteacher, who is supported well by the deputy headteacher, has been highly effective in securing continuous improvements in teaching, learning and achievement. The school had previously suffered a period of significant changes in staffing which has now stabilised. In a short period of time, school leaders have made rapid improvements in all of the key areas identified in the last inspection report. The drive and determination of the headteacher has been pivotal in changing the culture of the school to one in which all pupils behave well and are keen to learn.
- Middle and subject leaders work as an effective team to improve teaching and achievement across the school. Together with the headteacher and other senior leaders, they regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects and areas. Their evaluation of the quality of provision is accurate and their action plans are appropriate. Where weaknesses in teaching are identified, leaders take swift and effective action to secure improvements.
- School leaders and governors work hard to create a school culture in which learning can flourish. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Through the well-designed studies of their locality and the wider world around them pupils have learned about the importance of respect and tolerance. Pupils are encouraged to help others by, for example, raising money for charity. On one occasion, when sending balloons to other countries, pupils were delighted when they received a written response from a teacher in Germany saying '...exactly 24 years ago, the wall that separated Germany was torn down.... Could there be a better day to write?' This was shared with pupils who have written a reply.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and gives pupils the opportunity to apply the skills learned in English and mathematics in other subjects. However, the coverage of science is limited and there is too little opportunity for pupils to develop the skill of enquiry in science. The science subject leader is aware of this and is taking effective action to address this. Displays in classrooms and around the school show coverage of a range of themes and encourage pupils to develop a good understanding of cultural diversity and British values. The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain well and does not tolerate discrimination in any way.
- The school makes effective use of the pupil premium funding and leaders monitor its impact closely. Pupils who are eligible receive support that is well matched to their needs ensuring their good achievement. The school website makes clear to parents, in a detailed report, precisely how the money is spent.
- School leaders have used the additional funding for sports effectively. Part of the funding is used to provide a range of sporting activities at lunchtime and after school. More pupils are now participating in a variety of sports.
- The local authority has an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. Officers have been highly effective in supporting the headteacher and school leaders in driving improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to the school and have been fully involved in helping leaders to secure its rapid improvement. Governors have high expectations and hold school leaders to account for their performance. They are well informed about the school and pupils' performance, and are not afraid to ask challenging questions. They contribute to the school's self-evaluation and have good understanding of the areas of strength and weaknesses of the school.
 - Governors are well informed about what is done to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance. They receive regular reports from the headteacher and leaders on teaching and learning, achievement and the curriculum.
 - Governors have a clear overview of the school's finances. As a result they were able to talk confidently to inspectors about how the school spends the pupil premium and the sports funding and the impact

these have had on pupils' achievement and well-being.

- The governing body ensures that the requirements for safeguarding are fully met and that it carries out its statutory duties.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and throughout the day. Pupils come into lessons ready to learn, they settle quickly with minimum disruption. The behaviour management systems are highly effective and are followed consistently by all staff. Pupils are clear about the rewards for good behaviour and sanctions that are in place.
- As a result of a strong whole school focus on developing good attitudes for learning, pupils are now demonstrating skills such as resilience and determination. As one pupil put it 'I am developing the skill of stickability'. The school has used its 'mission for manners' badge to encourage pupils to be respectful, courteous and polite.
- The relationships between adults and pupils are good and as a result pupils have a positive attitude towards learning. They respond well to advice and are highly engaged and focused in lessons.
- Pupils enjoy school and take their responsibility seriously. They meet regularly with the headteacher to share their ideas about their school. Pupils in Year 6 talked confidently about the opportunities they are given to prepare for the transition to their next school, for example, by taking responsibility for producing a newsletter in collaboration with the local secondary school.
- The breakfast club provides pupils with a good start to the school day. The range of activities, such as reading and games, support learning and the development of pupils' thinking skills well.
- Parents have no concerns about behaviour and agree that pupils are kept safe and are well looked after.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils learn about keeping safe through the curriculum. They understand how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and mobile devices. Pupils in Year 6 produced a presentation on e-safety for other pupils.
- Pupils feel safe. They have a very good understanding of the different kinds of bullying and say that there are now very few incidents of bullying in school. They are clear about whom to report incidents to and say that staff deal with incidents very quickly. They understand that words can offend and racist comments are not tolerated.
- School leaders have worked hard to improve the attendance of pupils and have put into place a number of measures to ensure they attend school on a regular basis. As a result the figures for attendance have improved and are now in line with the national average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan lessons that are engaging and prepare resources that are well matched to the needs of the great majority of pupils. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning and how to apply this to their work. The feedback given by teachers and additional adults in lessons helps pupils to make improvements to their work. In lessons the assessment of learning is strong. However, children in the early years are not always given appropriate activities because teachers do not use assessment in this setting well enough to inform their lesson planning.

- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Teachers use mathematical vocabulary to ensure pupils develop their knowledge and understanding well. In lessons, pupils are challenged and given the opportunity to develop their reasoning skills. Pupils receive work that is well matched to their needs. For example, one high attaining pupil who was working on angles said 'I found it challenging but got there in the end after trying hard.'
- The teaching of reading is good. Through a structured carousel of reading activities, pupils develop a good understanding of comprehension and text. They used their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) to read unfamiliar words confidently. Older pupils read widely and often.
- The teaching of writing is highly effective. Work in pupils' books show that they are given the opportunity to write at length across the curriculum. In most of the lessons observed teachers focused extremely well on developing pupils' technical and creative vocabulary. As a result pupils progress well in lessons. The use of teacher questioning is also good, pupils are challenged to apply a range of writing strategies to their work. In a poetry lesson one child used personification well to describe the relationship between the sun and the moon; and wrote 'the moon spins in front of the sun like a ballerina'.
- Teaching assistants are highly effective in supporting learning. They work with small groups or on an individual basis to help those who need additional support. They use a range of strategies to ensure pupils make good progress in lessons.
- Although the most-able pupils are challenged in many lessons, school leaders do not closely monitor the achievement of this group. As a result, strategies to accelerate progress even further are not always identified by teachers and senior leaders.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards have risen rapidly in the past year. For the first time in three years, pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 have reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are in line with the national average. Due to much improved learning in the past year, overcoming substantial staffing changes, pupils' progress in all subjects between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2014 was broadly in line with the national average.
- The school's assessments show that pupils currently in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making good progress. Inspectors' scrutiny of writing and mathematics books confirms this judgement. The work seen in pupils' books indicates that pupils are able to write well at length and apply their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils are challenged in lessons through highly effective questioning and this helps them to achieve well.
- The current Year 6 cohort is very small and include a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs that joined the school mid-phase. The school's assessment showed these pupils joined the school with standards below national levels. They are supported well and are making good progress but their attainment is not yet in line with national expectations for all subjects. School leaders are aware of this and are taking effective action through the monitoring of books, plans and observations of lessons, to ensure all pupils are challenged to achieve their best.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in lessons. They are supported well in lessons and are also given extra support to ensure that they make good progress from their starting points.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the highest level at Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2014 was above the national average in reading and writing but not in mathematics. School leaders recognise this and have put appropriate intervention in place in mathematics to address this.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils was two terms behind others nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014. It was a year behind other pupils in school. The actions the school is taking are beginning to have an impact and current information from assessment show that disadvantaged pupils are making faster progress and the progress gap is narrowing.

- Although an improvement on the previous year, the proportion of pupils who passed the Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average in 2014. The English subject leader is taking effective action to address this and pupils are on track to achieve higher standards this year. Pupils are assessed more regularly to secure improvements.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage require improvement because teachers do not always use the information gathered from assessment effectively to identify what children need to learn next in order to improve. There have been several changes in leadership of the early years and in staffing which has led to a lack of continuity and low expectation by some staff. New appointments have been made but it is too early to see the impact of these changes.
- Leaders have good evidence to demonstrate that a significant proportion of children start Nursery with skills and abilities, particularly in language and communication, that are below those typical for their age. In 2014 the proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the time they entered Year 1 was lower than the national average.
- Where children receive specialist support to develop their communication skills, they are catching up with their peers. However, children's achievements seen during the inspection does not indicate that they are making good enough progress.
- The quality of teaching is variable. In sessions that are well planned, children are engaged and enthusiastic to learn. They show a desire to find out about new things. Teaching is ineffective when the activities are not well matched to what children need to learn next. When this happens, children quickly lose interest and behaviour can sometimes deteriorate.
- The relationship between adults and children is good, children are well listened to and will willingly share their ideas. As a result they are, and feel, safe.
- Parents and carers contribute to the school's understanding of their children's abilities. They are involved in settling their child into Nursery and Reception and have the option of settling in their child each day, in what the school calls the 'busy hands' session. This time is also used to speak to teachers about learning and concerns. As a result positive relationships are built in readiness for the next stage and Year 1.

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	131505
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	455953

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Sarah Poulter
Headteacher	Louise Shuttleworth
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2014
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